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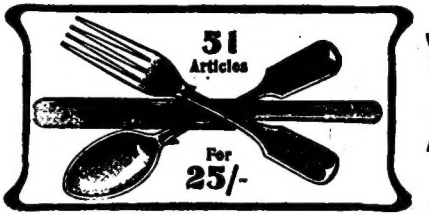

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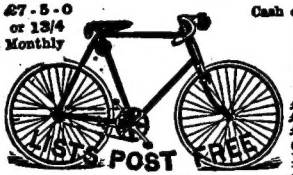

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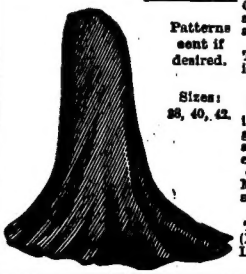

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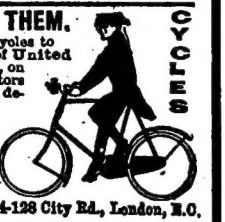

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Short Stories

No. 711. ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending August 16th, 1902.

"All's Right With the World."

By DAISY PENDER CUDLIP.

An Adventure at Sea.

A LAZY hot afternoon in August. Not a breath of wind stirring the leaves of the trees, or making the faintest ripple on the intense blue of the water that came lapping drowsily on to the little pebbly beach.

The little fishing village of Porthtowan, usually so brisk and lively, was following Nature's example and taking a siesta. No one seemed to be stirring, and there was absolutely no sound to break the intense stillness that usually prevails about three o'clock on the afternoon of an intensely hot day.

On the bench in front of a boat-house three ancient mariners sat, their pipes gone out, their arms folded and their eyes closed, half asleep, warming their old bones in the hot sunshine. On the beach a shock-headed boy was sprawling full length, one arm thrown across his face to shade him from the glare, while the other was stretched out carelessly, the palm of the hand turned up, with the fingers in the graceful curve that is only seen in the utter abandonment of repose.

Down the village street sauntered a man and a girl, her scarlet sunshade making a brilliant patch of colour and casting red reflections on to the white-washed walls of the cottages, as they slowly came towards the beach. Arrived there, they stood still for a moment, the girl gazing dreamily at the sea, while the man gazed intently at the girl, so much so, that involuntarily she turned and looked at him, but it was not the colour of her sunshade that was responsible for her glowing face just then.

"Shall we take the boat out, May?" he asked. Nodding her head in assent, as if afraid of breaking the spell of silence, she led the way to where the little brown dinghy was drawn up high and dry on the beach. The silence hitherto had been complete, but the spell was broken by the scraping noise of the boat running over the pebbles down to the water's edge. The shock-headed boy jumped up quickly and shook himself, the familiar sounds breaking suddenly in upon his dreams brought him back to the realities of life. The three ancient mariners woke up to find their pipes had gone out, and to go on with the yarns that had been interrupted by sleep an hour before.

A woman came to the door of the little inn and shook a duster, yawning as she did so, completely doing away with the impression she had meant to convey, namely, that she at any rate had not been taking a siesta. The sharp slap of the duster as she shook it had the undesired effect of waking up the baby next door, and roused by its lusty cries, the whole village machinery was once more set in motion.

Meanwhile the two who were responsible for this change had drifted away from the beach, the girl guiding the tiller with her little sunburnt hand, while the man pulled lazily at the oars. He was a striking looking man this Leonard Davis, tall, broad shouldered, with a figure well knit, giving an impression of strength with suppleness, while he carried his head erect as a soldier and as a gentleman should.

It has been said that "Man is fire and woman tow, and the Devil brings them together." Certainly if that is the case May Leslie was just the sort of woman who would be as tow to this man's fiery nature. Possessed of a strong vitality, she lived every moment of her life either suffering keenly or enjoying keenly. Her sensitive nature answered readily to all outside influences, either happy or otherwise. Therefore it was not in the least strange when this man crossed her path that she should be attracted by his strong personality, while he on the other hand was puzzled and fascinated by the many-sidedness of her character.

As yet no words of love had passed between them. They had seen a great deal of each other, and of course instinctively knew that they were drifting into those dangerously sweet paths, where the presence of each to the other makes the sweetness.

They had met some months before at a big dance, but it was not until Mrs. Leslie and her two girls settled down at this quiet little village, to live a life of the strictest economy, that they were thrown much together. But just above the village on the heights was a Fort where at this time two companies of the Royal Wessex Regiment were quartered, Leonard Davis being the captain of one of them. So it happened that instead of perpetually going into the neighbouring town, which was the garrison, he used to prefer going down to a

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certain quaint little cottage in Porthtowan where he was sure of a welcome from one pair of eyes at least. May's sister Nelly was many years younger, being only thirteen, and the most incorrigible tomboy. But the three of them were on the best of terms, and many a pleasant afternoon had they spent together.

On this particular afternoon he had come down from the Fort as usual to take the girls out for a row, but Nelly, for a wonder, was cross, and generally upset by the heat, and announced her intention of staying at home. Leonard Davis and May, however, did not press her to join them as she had meant them to do, but went without her, nothing loth at being alone together. The village of Porthtowan was in the corner of a very sheltered bay, the land on the right running out to a point thickly covered right down to the water's edge with luxuriant foliage.

It was here that those two guided the boat on this particular afternoon in August. They turned the bows of the boat into a long, narrow cove, and, shipping oars, drifted silently up to a tiny sandy beach, deliciously cool and shady after the glaring heat outside. Leonard jumped out of the boat and held out his hands to May, who, placing her two little brown hands on his, sprang lightly down by his side.

"Take care, the rocks are very slippery, you must let me guide you safely across them," he said, still retaining a firm hold of one of the hands so confidently resting in his, and so led her across the slippery ground to a comfortable seat on the rocks.

"How charmingly cool and pretty you look this afternoon," he said. "I like you in that white thing, awfully," touching the sleeve of her white boating dress as he spoke.

"Do you?" she answered laughing. "I'm glad my appearance pleases your lordship," and getting up she made him a mock curtesy, a thousand mischievous glances dancing in her eyes, as she turned them full upon him. It was a battery against which the man was not proof; he caught her hands and said:

"If you look at me like that I must kiss you, so be careful."

"You wouldn't dare!" she laughed back; and what evil spirit was it that prompted her still to look straight into his eyes with that merry, defiant look? that said as plainly as possible, "kiss me," while all the time her heart was thumping with the conviction that she should hate for him to kiss her, and yet—she hardly knew, her brain seemed in a whirl, and before she knew how it happened his arms were round her, straining her passionately to his heart, which she could feel beating violently. His face was close to hers, in another second their lips would have met, when a fierce angry light came into her eyes, and throwing back her head out of his reach, panting with anger she cried out, "How dare you!" Instantly he let her go, and she would have fallen had he not caught hold of her arm, for she was trembling violently.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a cold, cutting voice.

"How dare you!" May repeated, her eyes blazing and her breath coming in little short, uneven gasps, with the suddenness of her anger. For answer Leonard turned and looked steadily at her. The look of grave reproof puzzled her.

"What was your motive in trying to humbug me?" he said in a tone that roused all the girl's fighting instincts, and in a moment this yielding little bit of womanhood became hard and stubborn as the veriest mule.

"I don't know what you mean," she said; "and, moreover, I question your right to take that tone with me. It is for you to beg my pardon."

"I do most sincerely," he answered. "But," he continued, "you must acknowledge that it was your own fault, you led me on to do it."

An indignant denial was on her lips, but the words were checked just as she was about to utter them, as she caught sight of the look on his face. Instantly she saw that she had led him on, and that it was useless denying it when he saw through her so plainly; but, on the other hand, no power on earth should drag an acknowledgment of the same from her lips. She was angry with herself for her folly, but with the justice of her sex, she was ready to vent her anger on the man. She was angry with him for not divining at once why she was angry, forgetting that she herself hardly knew, so mixed were the workings of her mind.

She was a woman who must be proud of anything or anybody she cared for, the man who should win her love must be stronger than herself, and now she was angry that this man should have put himself in the position of begging her pardon, when all the time the fault had been on her side. The thing that hurt her pride in him most was that he should submit to it, but such was the contradictoriness of her character, she would fight against his getting the upper hand until the very last gasp, although she wished him to conquer her. She hated the idea of being conquered, but still more she would hate the man for not conquering her. So setting her teeth she maintained a dogged silence, drawing patterns on the sand with the point of her boot, and then angrily rubbing them out again, when she found her companion, to her annoyance, kept silence also.

At last, her patience exhausted, she turned her head sharply round and said: "Well?"

"I am waiting for your sense of justice to prompt you to say that you did not act quite fairly by me just now, May—and I'm not going to move from here until you do."

If only he had stopped at the first half of his sentence, he would have won a generous acknowledgment from her, but the fatal attempt to force her hand conveyed in the last words, checked the generous impulse, and roused all the pride and stubbornness in her.

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to wait for some time."

"Very well, I assure you it's a matter of the smallest consequence. I have made a mistake in my first impressions of you, but luckily in time not to be humbugged by you any more. Please do not trouble yourself about it in the very least, it's not worth troubling about." The cool deliberate way in which he spoke cut her heart like a knife at each word. The nonchalance of his manner was far more galling both to her pride and her love—yes, she acknowledged the latter now that he seemed to be drifting away from her—was far more galling than any outburst of anger, or assumed superiority.

"You don't understand me," she said, and her voice sounded harsh and unnatural to herself.

"Understand you!" he replied with a mocking laugh, "I wonder if you understand yourself? It's more than I do. But as I said before it really doesn't signify," and he coolly set about lighting a cigarette. The manner and tone of his words made her wince and her lips quivered for a moment, the tears being very near the surface, but she controlled herself with an effort, glad that her momentary weakness had escaped his observation. But he had noticed it, and his assumed nonchalance gave way under the conviction that perhaps after all he was wronging her in thinking her a humbug.

He loved her desperately, and, until his doubts of a few moments ago, had been ready to stake his oath on her sincerity. But the horrible doubt that she was merely a coquette trifling with him, galled him. Much as he loved her, if she was only amusing herself at his expense she should not have the satisfaction of seeing how he suffered, so he assumed an air of indifference, which, however, gave way momentarily at the sight of the evident distress in the girl's face. He clenched his hand fiercely until the knuckles stood out hard and white like polished ivory. She saw it, and her instinct told her that his nonchalance was assumed, he really did care for her. If he had not cared, he would not have taken the trouble to be angry at her supposed defection. Impulsively she put out her hand and touched his coat sleeve, he started violently at the mere touch of her fingers, sent a responsive thrill through his whole being, but still he kept his head averted.

"Leonard, you are misunderstanding me, cruelly, you think I am a common flirt and a humbug. I am not, I am not, why won't you believe me?"

"Because, having led me on to make a fool of myself once, you can't expect me to be as ready to do so again. How am I to know you are not humbugging me even now for all your

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apparent sincerity," he answered, and looked at her in a way that would have cowed a less plucky woman. She met his look steadily, her head proudly thrown back, giving an unmistakable air of dignity to the little figure.

"You must know perfectly well," she answered quietly, "that I am not humbugging you, as you call it, and only the suspicious part of your nature won't let you acknowledge it."

"I wonder if I can believe what you say?" he replied. "You must confess you were rather to blame just now; you didn't act quite fairly by me. It was not exactly riding straight, was it?" He asked the question almost imploringly; but getting no response he went on rather sadly, "Never mind, if you didn't see of yourself that it was not quite generous, I cannot be the one to show you."

He had touched the right chord at last, he had appealed to her generosity and reason, and she responded instantly.

"I see it all, Leonard," she answered, turning her face impulsively towards him. "It was not generous of me; in fact, it was horribly mean. Will you forgive me?" The proud little head drooped, and she blushed furiously as she spoke.

"Forgive you, my darling!" drawing her gently towards him. "Why, there is nothing now for *me* to forgive, rather will you forgive me, for mistrusting you? I was a brute to do it. Can you forgive me for being such a brute to you?"

"Of course I can," she answered, smiling radiantly up at him. "But seriously, you'll never mistrust me again, will you? or I think it would kill me. You don't know how cruelly you hurt me just now."

"My darling, forgive me, how could I have been such a brute?" and taking her two hands in his he bent his head down and kissed them, as a subject might a sovereign. The action touched her—"It was my own fault," she said.

"Not a word more about that," he answered gently, "that is over and done with, and you must never speak of its having been your fault again. Do you understand me, little woman?"

"Thank you," she answered, "I *do* understand you," raising a pair of eyes glistening with love and gratitude to his face. She had sacrificed her pride in acknowledging herself in the wrong. This man had shown himself to be her master, and her love had conquered her pride when he had conquered her.

"May," he said, "you must know I love you, do you think you could love me well enough to be my wife?"

He had taken hold of her hands, and for answer she let herself be drawn gently towards him, and lifting her face with the light of a great joy in it, to his, their lips met in a long, passionate kiss. In that supreme moment Time seemed to stand still for both of them, May's heart was throbbing with a wild happiness that was almost a pain, so intense was her

"How dare you!" May repeated, her eyes blazing and her breath coming in little, short, uneven gasps, with the suddenness of her anger. For answer Leonard turned and looked steadily at her. The look of grave reproof puzzled her.

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love, that now could allow itself to find an outlet. But even the greatest moments of our lives have their ending.

With a sigh of happiness May drew herself away from him, but only to let her head rest caressingly on his shoulder while his arm was round her.

"Am I only dreaming, or is it real, that you have asked me to be your wife?" she said.

"Stern reality, little woman," he answered, "I shall ask your mother to give you to me soon, we've nothing to wait for, and I want my little wife."

"I'm just the very happiest and proudest girl in the whole world," she answered, "I'm so happy, that I hardly dare to realise it for fear it should escape me, as most of the things I do wish for escape me."

"You little fatalist, don't think I am going to let you go once having got you. I'm afraid you will just have to reconcile yourself to the idea of putting up with me for the rest of your natural life."

"Leonard, darling, I wonder if you realise how happy your love has made me?" and once more she held up her face readily and gladly for her lover to kiss.

Lost to everything but themselves they had disregarded time, and taken no notice of their surroundings. Had they not been so preoccupied they would have noticed that the tide had gone far out leaving the boat high and dry, held fast by a rock.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Leonard Davies when this fact suddenly revealed itself to him. "Just look at the boat. We're stuck here till next tide unless I can get her off. Do you know it's nearly half-past six," looking at his watch. "I'd no idea it was so late."

He ran down to where the boat was lying and tried to shove her off, but she was heavier than he had thought, and try as hard as he would nothing would move her, and the water line already about one hundred yards away, was still receding. The whole awkwardness of the situation flashed upon him.

"Give me a helping hand, little woman," he called out. "The boat has just got wedged a bit, but I can jerk her out if you help me, I think."

She came as requested, and together they tried to move the boat, the more they jerked, the tighter she seemed to get wedged. "What *are* we to do?" said the girl, turning pale as the idea of having to remain there struck her for the first time.

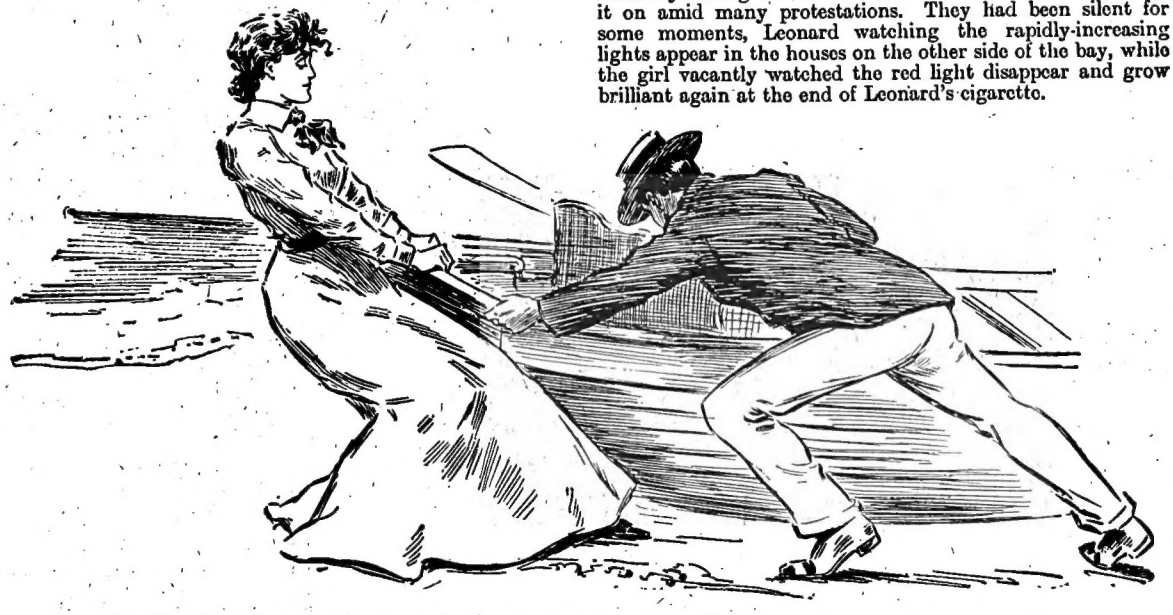
"I'm afraid there's nothing for it but to wait until the tide returns, I'll have one more try though to see if I can't move her, when I say three—just you give a lifting kind of a jerk, and perhaps we may manage to get her off."

But it was no use—nothing they tried had the least effect. At last, giving it up, they sat down and looked helplessly at each other. "I'm awfully sorry, darling, but I'm afraid we shall have to make the best of it and wait here for the next few hours."

"I don't mind one bit," she answered, nestling closer to his side, "I should have been afraid had I been stranded here alone, but with you I don't mind a bit."

So resigning themselves to the inevitable they prepared to wait—watching the gradually lengthening shadows, then the pink reflections on sea and sky cast by the setting sun—succeeded in its turn by the silver light of the moon, as she rose making a silver pathway on the calm water.

Although the day had been scorching, the evenings were chilly, and May shivered slightly, but tried to prevent showing she was cold. Her lover noticed it at once, however, and instantly taking off his own coat he insisted on her putting it on amid many protestations. They had been silent for some moments, Leonard watching the rapidly-increasing lights appear in the houses on the other side of the bay, while the girl vacantly watched the red light disappear and grow brilliant again at the end of Leonard's cigarette.



Together they tried to move the boat, but the more they jerked the tighter she seemed to get wedged.

"What time is it?" she asked at length, breaking in upon his thoughts. He looked at his watch—"Just ten minutes past nine, we can't have much longer to wait, the tide will be up in another hour or so," but in his heart of hearts he knew it would not be up sufficiently to float the boat until eleven o'clock at least.

He was torturing himself with bitter reproaches for his carelessness in having, unwittingly, placed his darling in a false position, and so given the reins to malicious tongues, who are ever ready to put the worst construction on anything. The girl, for her part, was far too happy in the consciousness that they two were apart, alone together in this the supreme moment of her life, that any other aspect of the situation did not present itself before her. It did occur to her that her mother might be anxious and wonder what had become of her, but she quickly consoled herself with the thought that her mother would guess something of the kind had happened, and cease to be nervous, knowing that Captain Davis was there to see no harm could come to her, for as she had often said, "Captain Davis was a man who could

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be trusted to look after a boat." Consequently the next two hours seemed to pass very rapidly, and it was with feelings not unmixed with regret that she learnt the boat was floated and they could go.

It was a lovely moonlight night, and once outside the Cove, everything stood out as clearly as in the day. The soft, mellow light seemed to Leonard's eyes to play lovingly round the face of the girl he loved, and reveal fresh beauties in the sweet, essentially womanly face. Her dark grey hazel eyes with the dove's ring round the iris, glowed with a deep liquid light, that transformed her whole face, and revealed the very depths of her soul. Her heart on her lips, and her soul in her eyes, how could he help loving her, and he was proud and happy in the thought that she was to be his alone, his to love and to protect.

(To be concluded next week.)

Firmness Which Failed.

A Forbidden Outing and its Sequel.

"You cannot go, and that settles it!" said Alfred Saylow, loudly.

If a bolt from the heavens had descended in the midst of the little group seated about the breakfast table it would hardly have created more consternation.

Julia Saylow, stout and impressive, put down her coffee cup with deliberation, and eyed her husband in open-mouthed wonder.

Violet and Mignonette pushed back their chairs as if a second outburst would precipitate immediate flight, and looked anxiously at their mother.

Only Willoughby, the nine-year-old scion of the house of Saylow, retained his composure to any extent. He was accustomed to violent surprises in his daily walk and recovered himself quickly.

"Why not?" he asked, boldly.

"Because you can't—that's why," returned his father, sharply. "You all hear me, don't you?"

It was quite evident that he had been heard, although no reply was forthcoming. The girls feebly played with their food; Julia's face underwent various changes of colour, which finally settled into an aggressive red; and the boy broke into a long whistle of bewilderment.

"Will, you may leave the table," said Mr. Saylow sternly.

Willoughby gazed thoughtfully at him for a moment, then seized a slice of toast and vanished. He had seen that in his father's eye which reminded him of an almost forgotten hour of sadness, closely associated with the tingling recollection of a strap. So he went.

"He meant it," he ruminated as he slipped away; "yes, I'm sure he meant it! What's got into him?"

Fortunately breakfast was nearly over when the surprising dictum had been announced; while digestive processes were undoubtedly impaired in the case of all except Willoughby, it was better than a disappointment on an empty stomach.

Saylow was not an imposing figure as he folded his napkin and rose to depart. A thin, undersized man, with much grey in the light brown hair and straggling beard. He stooped slightly from close attention at his desk, and there seemed an air of physical weakness about him, in strong contrast to his portly wife and bouncing daughters.

But his usually kind grey eyes, wrinkled at the corners with his perpetual smile of conciliation, were now quite fierce, as he stopped with his hand on the door knob and looked severely at Julia. "You heard me!" he said with emphasis.

When the sound of his quick little nervous steps was heard fading away in the passage, the feminine tongues were unloosed.

Violet spoke first. Plump, pretty, and independent, she tossed her head with a gathering bloom on her round cheeks.

"The idea!" she observed; "how entirely uncalled for!"

"I should think so," cried Mignonette, younger and even prettier than her sister.

The repression of Julia now burst forth. She was an affectionate wife, a devoted mother, and possessed of many virtues. Alas, the rod of authority was to her fingers as a clasp of gold to the miser, and she had waved it calmly and unflinchingly over the heads of her household for so many years that the fact of Alfred's imagining he could uplift his voice in opposition to her wishes seemed preposterous.

Surely, he had renounced all claim to such recognition long ago. Why, he was only her husband!

"My dear children," she began rapidly, but impressively, "I trust you observed that I controlled myself. I thought it better to say nothing in reply, nor to open an argument. There will be no argument—we shall go as I have planned. Vi, you will invite Edgar; Min, you may order the waggonette from the stable. We shall go. Tell Willoughby. We start at eleven."

Her daughters embraced her with pride. So that was all she cared for the paternal explosion. How foolish they were to have been so upset. But, then, they had never known him to speak so before. He was always so meek and complacent and did just what was expected of him.

"Of course we will go," cried Vi. "I knew we would all the time. Let's get the luncheon ready."

Trips to the lake, five miles from the town, had become weekly occurrences. Alfred had sat down to a lonely midday meal so frequently that he could scarcely remember the number. And these meals had been occasions of trying thought.

"It cannot go on," he had said to himself again and again. "I do not see what Julia is thinking of. It is too expensive. The bill from the stables is something enormous—and they get boats and men to row them and hire fishing tackle. I can't bear to say anything—they enjoy themselves, I suppose—but Julia should know better. She is so thrifty in some ways and so improvident in others. I do not understand it. I am so out of the habit of finding fault at home that I don't know what to say. I shall lose my self-control some day; I know I shall."

And he had. No one but he knew the volcano smouldering under that eruption—it was but the hiss of the puff of steam from the safety valve of the boiler of a surcharged mind, anxious and worried and shrinking—hating to give offence and having to.

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Saylow attended to his business that morning with a certain feeling of exalted emancipation. He had asserted himself. He had not intended to be so cross, but his voice had sounded different from what he meant it should. Still, they had said nothing, and it would be all right by dinner time, and he would exert himself to be very pleasant.

For the apparently meek little man was of a fierce temper at times, and some men knew it. But at home—oh! at home—anything but an angry word. So he had often seethed inwardly with a closed mouth.

"Going?" queried Willoughby, in great astonishment, when he was notified. "Why, father said we couldn't."

"Ma says we are, and she is the one," answered Vi. "He didn't mean anything. Hurry up, Will, and go over to Edgar's."

The boy shook his head dubiously. "I don't know about this," he said cautiously. "He did mean it. They say pa's awful in the office when he gets cross."

"Oh, come on," laughed his sister; "he is a dear, harmless old thing, and will be all right by to-night. Run along. We are going to fish to-day, you know. The wind is just right."

This was too much for Willoughby. He started for the house of Edgar Lovell immediately, and that young man welcomed him with the effusion due to a prospective brother-in-law of tender years and hardened remarks.

"Tell Mr. Saylow that we will be back about six o'clock," called Julia to her maid, as they drove away in style behind a pair of greys. "Give him a good lunch, Margaret."

"It is a lovely day. I almost wish they had gone," sighed Alfred as he walked into the house at noon. "I had to do it, though. I will try to make it up to them in some way—why, where is everybody? Hullo, Julia, where are you?"

"They're gone, sir. Mrs. Saylow said she expected to be back at about six. Your lunch is ready, sir," announced Margaret, appearing from the kitchen.

"Gone! Gone where?" gasped the man with a shrinking premonition of the reply.

"To the lake, sir. Didn't they tell you?"

"Oh—oh—yes! To the lake. Yes, I forgot," replied Alfred, instinctively hiding his feelings, while a great wave of anger surged through him. "Serve the luncheon now."

He flew upstairs to his room, closed the door and paced up and down with clenched fists and set lips. The mirror on the bureau reflected a white, strange face, unlike his own.

"I'll teach them a lesson they will never forget," he muttered. "It is high time. I will show them who is master in this establishment!"

He had never been so angry and he had never before known such a feeling of hardness. "I'll begin at once," he decided.

"Maggie," he said calmly to the girl as he sat down at the table, "this house is to be closed to-day. Here are your wages and a month extra. I want you to pack up and be gone by five o'clock. You shall have a splendid recommendation—you have been a good girl."

Margaret began to weep loudly with incoherent protests.

"Stop crying, now," said Saylow; "it cannot be helped. Do as I say and leave everything."

"But, Mr. Saylow——" snivelled Maggie.

"I'll attend to everything," he replied. "This is my affair, and you must be out by five o'clock. Don't try to talk to me. I will not listen. Go now and get ready."

With the firm belief that she was alone in the house with one demented, the domestic dried her eyes and departed for her little room to pack her small belongings with alacrity.

"That settles Maggie," thought the irate Saylow. "Now I will write her a testimonial, and also one to my dutiful wife, lock up everything as tight as a miser's fist and get out myself."

It was a very thoroughly closed domicile that Alfred Saylow contemplated from the pavement, when, at half-past four, he watched a wild-looking girl take her departure.

Margaret's fears had grown to frightful dimensions during the last two hours, as she heard the enraged man of the house tearing about and fumbling with locks. Now he stood glaring after her and jingling a big bunch of keys. Surely it was a fortunate escape.

A short but impressive note was lying on Julia's little writing desk for her edification, in view of the time when she should gain admittance. Her husband looked cautiously about, mentally noting such articles as might be used for battering rams. He was quite positive that his better half would not delay operations. All the afternoon he had worked in a frenzy of anger. Now he stopped, wondering at himself.

"It's done," he murmured. "Am I a fool or not?" A curious reaction possessed him. Thoughts of Julia, of the girls, of little Will—a strange medley of their loving ways and tender words and kindly acts, of the home-comings and home-goings of the past, of the trustful look of the slender-faced bride of the long ago, the babies' faces, the burdens and joys borne and shared, rushed through his brain.

He started irresolutely up the steps, his eyes full of tears. Then he shook himself together and walked rapidly away, hardening his soul.

A boy stopped him—a boy who was breathless and panting. "Here, sir!" he gasped, holding out a paper. "It's from the stable."

"Tell 'em I can't pay that bill to-day. I'm too busy to attend to it!" snapped Saylow.

"No, no," cried the lad; "'tain't no bill. It's about your folks. They're all drowned in the lake."

Saylow clutched the note, glanced at it, and ran, making little moaning sounds like a tortured, dying animal. Five minutes later he was galloping like the wind through the dust on the road to the lake. People yelled at him.

"It's a madman!" they shouted. "Get out of the way!" Then the pounding hoof and the savage lash of the whip were by and out of hearing of their shocked ears.

"Thank God and that doctor, Mr. Saylow!" exclaimed the proprietor of the boathouse; "we thought your wife and one of the girls were gone. The young man kep' the other girl up and the little feller swam ashore. Lucky they was close in, and lucky the doctor knowed how to bring folks to. They're all right now, I think. All in bed up at the hotel."

Alfred leant against him, white and trembling. The rough man covered his eyes. The other was praying aloud, a strange, incoherent mixture of heartfelt words. Presently he stopped with a long breath. "They must stay at the hotel to-night," he said. "I'll go there now, if you'll lend me your arm. Send their waggonette home, Bob. I'll ride back. I think Mr. Lovell had better stay too, to look after them. Our girl had to go away suddenly, and they'll be more comfortable here. I'll drive out in the morning and get them, and I'll send out everything they need this evening. I have some business I must attend to and I may not be able to come myself."

Saylow sat by Julia's bed for a long time, holding her hand in happy silence. She was very weak, and glad to stay.

Alfred, a carpenter and a locksmith were busily engaged from seven o'clock until nine. Maggie was recovered immediately and silence purchased with the extra month's wages, but she has been known to say that Mr. Saylow is a queer man.

"Yes," said Julia, as she went up the steps the next day on her husband's arm, "we were very comfortable at the hotel, but after all, Alfred dear, there is nothing like the comforts of one's own home. Why, what's that litter in the corner?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Saylow, meekly. "I had a man in to mend some of the doors. They squeaked, you know, and the locks needed mending."

"Yes, they did," replied his wife. "I'm glad it's done."

E. Walker.

TO THOSE WHO WRITE.

A Prize of One Guinea will be paid every week by the Editor for the best short story sent in by any of his readers. Contributions should not be less than 1,500 words in length, and not more than 3,000. The Editor reserves to himself the right to publish any contribution submitted. Stamped addressed envelopes must be inclosed for the return of the stories, but, while every care will be taken, the Editor does not hold himself responsible for possible loss of MSS.

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A Rank Outsider.

Telling of Two British Officers and a Girl.

"Who's the new man, Dolly?"

"That's a hard question."

"Why?"

"Well, the individual referred to seems to me to be just—the new man, who, as far as this regimental community is concerned, will never attain into the 'old man.'"

"Ah! what's the matter with him?"

"Matter! Nothing that I am aware of."

"Well, what's his name?"

"Jones—Absalom Jones."

"Great Scott! Why, that settles it!"

"Settles what?"

"His social status; his position in the regiment—everything!"

"What has his name to do with his position as an officer in His Majesty's Two-hundredth Foot?"

"What has his name to do with it? Could any man answering to the name of Jones—Absalom Jones—ever be anything else but a rank outsider?"

"Oh! I don't know!" replied Lieutenant Adolphus Trevor, suddenly assuming the argumentative. "I haven't the faintest idea as to the blue-bloodness or otherwise, of the worthy sub's. forbears, but I have heard that, in spite of his name, he is a rattling good fellow."

"That remains to be seen," returned Captain Rayne. "He's beastly rich, has no manners worth mentioning, and dresses like a counter-jumper."

"Well, I'm open to bet you anything you like, that, in less than a month, you will not only have changed your opinion, but will be our friend Absalom's most devoted."

Captain Arthur Rayne was in the way of being the "big dog" of the Two-hundredth's mess; when he barked every other curled and scented military canine barked in unison. But with one exception—Dolly Trevor—who took the keenest delight on any and every occasion of pinching the "big dog's" tail.

Now it was a curious fact that the gallant Captain himself was, from an ancestral point of view, a social mystery. True, his service dated well back into the conveniently dim past; not one of his present comrades of the Two-hundreth having witnessed his joining; but there were officers in more than one out-of-the-way station abroad who could recollect the talk and circumstance attending Arthur Rayne's regimental initiation.

One thing there was about him, however, in these latter days, which puzzled everybody—from subaltern to colonel. Whence did he derive the means to keep up a more than ordinarily extravagant mode of living? Four-in-hand, fine stable, Scotch shooting, up-river places—these were not maintained out of the rent-roll of a Spanish castle or estate; there must be some more tangible source of income than that to warrant expenditure more appropriate to a millionaire than to a holder of His Majesty's commission.

But though the majority wondered, they accepted his invitations; it was Trevor, and Trevor only, who doubted and declined. This piqued the Captain, who left no stone unturned to conciliate this rebel to his rule.

But though courteous and tactful, Trevor would not be "commandeered," and the two men, therefore, though outwardly civil, were mutually conscious each of the other's distrust and suspicion.

This was the state of affairs when Rayne tackled Trevor on the subject of the new recurit to the mess, and though he ailed to obtain much in the shape of satisfactory information he gleaned sufficient to almost make him believe in his mind that the cultivation of the new-comer might be attended with profit to himself.

"I needn't introduce the brute about," he argued with himself; "that wouldn't be in the running at all; introduce him, that is, except to a select few!" and the Captain smiled in a way which, had the Lieutenant seen at the moment, would inevitably have confirmed the latter gentleman in his opinion with regard to Captain Rayne's moral position.

"Anyway, I'll consult Kit about it, and, there being no time like the present, I'll run down to Molesey as soon as parade's over."

The Two-hundredth were stationed at Hounslow, convenient alike for towns and for up-river trips.

It was a hot day in July, and the parade ground was like a sandy Sahara.

Just before the commencement of the morning's duties the Colonel was seen issuing from his quarters in company with a young officer, a stranger. The pair were in close, pleasant conversation, continued until they reached the group surrounding the "colour."

"Gentlemen!" said the Colonel, "let me present you to a new comrade—Lieutenant Jones."

"Charmed to welcome you amongst us!" said Captain Rayne, as spokesman. "Not on duty to-day, I see."

"No," put in the Colonel, "Mr. Jones will simply watch the parade this morning, and come on duty to-morrow."

There could not be a greater contrast than that between this tall, fair, boyish-faced young fellow and Captain Arthur Rayne, whose dark, almost saturnine features insensibly reminded one of Velasquez's portrait of Philip II. of Spain.

It must be admitted that Absalom Jones created, on the whole, a good impression among his new messmates; while Trevor, already predisposed in his favour, at once made advances of a friendly nature.

Now, this was altogether opposed to the Captain's ideas of what ought to be, and of that which he intended, all being well, should be. He did not desire that Absalom Jones should be popular; did not wish even that friendship, in the ordinary sense of the word, should exist as between the new man and himself. Hence it was that, parade over, he at once changed into "mufti" and looked up the trains on the Thames Valley line.

"If anyone can arrange details in a little matter of this sort, it's Kit! I don't think I'm a fool by any means, but Kit is a born genius—a Circe and a Delilah in wonderful combination. What's this she says in the note I received this morning? 'Father has asked me to tell you that if you will go down to your place at Shiplake on Friday, he will meet you there, and bring a *friend* with him. His friend is young Abner Jones—Jones, the big contractor's eldest son. A younger brother, Absalom, is, I see, just gazetted to your regiment. They have both of them pots of money, so you can make a safe book if you hedge judiciously. Wire me as to what you intend doing about Friday. Love, Kit.'"

He was in the act of folding up this letter, when his servant brought in a card.

"Ladies to see you, sir."

He glanced at the pasteboard.

"Mrs. and Miss Seymour."

"Carriage from town, Hobbs?"

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"Yes, sir; and Miss Seymour told me to say as she wished to see you particular, sir."

"Oh, very well; say that I'll be done in a moment. Confounded nuisance!" he said viciously, as Hobbs left on his errand. "To think that she should come down just at the wrong moment! Wonder what's up? If they want me to go back with them, I must make some sort of an excuse. I can't let this Jones chance slip, engagement or no engagement!"

Daphne Seymour was a girl that any man might have been proud to prospectively own. Her name fitted her like the daintiest of gloves, for there was an old-world atmosphere and freshness about her that was perfectly delicious.

People often wondered at her acceptance of Arthur Rayne, and prophesied anything but happiness when they should marry.

Just as Rayne came to the carriage side, Absalom Jones strode across the square in their direction, and, with an earnest glance at Daphne, passed up the steps into the quarters.

"Who is that, Arthur?" asked Daphne eagerly.

"That!—Oh, only the fellow who joined this morning. He is something of a cad, I hear; a tradesman's son; plenty of money, but a 'rank outsider.'"

"Oh, I shouldn't have thought so!" said Daphne. "Why, he looked just like a living picture of a Saxon warrior of Alfred's time!"

"Do you think so?" said Rayne, with an ill-concealed sneer. "Sorry I can't agree with you."

"But, Arthur!" said Mrs. Seymour, "we have come to fetch you back with us. Daphne wants you to take her to the Opera to-night."

Worrying to get away, Rayne, after hurriedly expressing his regret that he could not accompany the ladies back to Cadogan Square, only waited for the carriage to be well out of sight, to take a cab for the station.

Meanwhile, Hobbs was busy putting his master's rooms to right.

"Hullo! what's this?" he exclaimed, as his eye fell upon a half-folded note upon the floor of the bedroom.

No man, folks say, is a hero to his valet, and the reason of it is, perhaps, that the servant has so many chances of illicitly acquiring information, and is not too scrupulous in availing himself of them.

Hobbs' present action was a case in point.

"'The Paddock, Molesey.' Why, that's where old Ransome, the bookie, lives; who is a trifle more than a bookie, if all's true as is said about him. '!Kit'—that's handsome Kitty, his daughter. Blest if I didn't think he had some game on down that way; and him with such a lovely sweetheart, too! If I'd a girl like Miss Seymour I'd let the rest of the sex go hang!"

It may be supposed that Hobbs sometimes "had a bit on" himself, he seemed to be so well up in betting matters. He made no scruple about reading the letter; the result being a long, low whistle of surprise and disgust.

"I ain't a saint, by a long way; but afore I'd pluck a pigeon or rather, a pair on 'em, just to give a she cat like Kitty Ransome the biggest part of the feathers, I'd drown myself, and drowning's too good for *my* man while there's a noose of honest rope, and one as can use it, knocking about."

The room door was open, and Hobbs, unusually excited, was talking louder than prudence suggested.

"Hobbs!"

"Sir."

The soldier-servant came smartly to attention as Lieutenant Trevor paused in the corridor, opposite the Captain's bedroom.

"What's that you are muttering to yourself about 'pigeons,' and the hangman's noose? And what is that you have in your hand?"

"It's a letter, sir, the Captain dropped, and——"

"Which you have read?"

"Well, sir——"

"No! I don't want to see Captain Rayne's letters! Lay it down!"

"Excuse me, sir, but unless you do read it, or get the Colonel to read it, or let me tell you what is in it, there'll be mischief, and that before the week's out."

"Well, stay where you are, while I call the Colonel."

As fortune would have it, Colonel Mildmay that moment passed along the corridor.

"Colonel," said Trevor, "something very awkward has happened. Hobbs, come here!"

Hobbs marched obediently into the corridor, and stood at attention.

"Now, Hobbs!" said Trevor, "in the ordinary case a gentleman's letters are sacred—a fact you don't seem quite to comprehend—and we should order you not only to replace the letter where you found it, but punish you severely for breach of trust; but certain circumstances connected with the interests of an officer of the regiment render exceptional action necessary. Hand the Colonel the letter you picked up—and read."

Making a pace forward, Hobbs placed the letter in Colonel Mildmay's hands.

"Now," said the latter to Trevor, after a careful perusal of it, "now the secret of Captain Rayne's extravagance in living is out; and without a doubt I am warranted in placing this letter, together with the whole facts of the case, in the hands of the War Office."

"I am afraid, Colonel, that there is nothing better to be done."

"Where is your master now?" asked the Colonel of Hobbs.

"Gone to Molesey, sir.'

"Ah! he has asked for leave over Sunday."

"What are you going to do about Jones, sir?" said Trevor.

"I hardly know. Perhaps you are not aware that his father, the man who built that wonderful railway in Morocco, and I are the oldest and closest of friends. He is a singular man—witness his naming of his sons—but a strong man, mentally and morally. His son Absalom takes after him, and you can understand, therefore, Trevor, why it is that I wish the boy to be comfortable with us."

"Certainly I do."

The old veteran then expressed his more than regret at ever having introduced Arthur Rayne to the Seymours; Daphne being an especial pet of his, and his godchild.

The Colonel and Trevor were now in the former's quarters, Hobbs having been for the time dismissed, as under suspension.

"Lieutenant Jones to see you, sir."

"Ask him in, Sergeant."

"What's the matter?" said the Colonel.

"It's a queer thing to ask, sir, after just joining, but I have strong reasons for asking for a couple of days' leave."

"Well, truth to say, I'm not surprised; for I suppose you have heard something?"

"Yes, sir; Hobbs, Captain Rayne's servant, sent for me, and has told me that which necessitates my presence at once at——"

"Molesey?"

"How did you know that, Colonel?"

Then everything came out, and after a consultation with his two friends, and with a particular injunction from the Colonel to be careful and judicious, Absalom Jones was on his way to rescue his weak-minded elder brother, and to square accounts with Arthur Rayne.

That one glance which he had had of Daphne had served to imprint on his mind something he could not, even had he so desired, shake off. That she should be "engaged" to the man of whom he was now about to demand a reckoning was, beyond measure, inexplicable; inasmuch as the mating of light with darkness is always a matter for better men's wonder.

Arrived at Molesey, and having enlisted the services of one of "Taggs" people to pilot him to the "Paddock," Sam Ransome's place, he found himself to be only just in time.

At the gate stood a brougham and pair, into which was being assisted an "old" young man of thirty or thereabouts.

A tall, handsome girl and Captain Rayne were on either side of the other. Coming down the path was old Sam Ransome him-

(Concluded at foot of next page.)

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But don't leave it till Tuesday, when the next number is published, or you will find your newsagent is sold out. Just ask him to keep it by for you till you call on Tuesday for it. . .

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self, as well known on every English racecourse as the King on his throne.

Stalwart and determined, Absalom Jones just stepped to the carriage door, and with a simple "Pardon me!" drew the trembling figure's arm through his own. Raising his hat to Kit Ransome, Absalom turned to Arthur Rayne.

"It was my intention, sir," he said gravely, "to demand an explanation of you, concerning your share in this business. I see, however, that my brother's condition is such that an instant removal to his home is necessary, so that the explanation is only deferred until an early future opportunity."

Within the hour, the brothers were safe under the paternal roof in Pont Street.

* * * * * * *

That which came to be styled the "Rayne affair" was more than the usual proverbial nine days' wonder, by reason, perhaps, of the popularity of one of the actors in it.

Absalom Jones more than justified his friend, Colonel Milward's estimate and appreciation of him, for, the Rayne despotism at an end, his genial, happy disposition set him on a pinnacle, from which he has never since descended.

Arthur Rayne deemed it advisable to visit the Continent, whither the War Secretary's request for his immediate resignation in due course followed him.

* * * * * * *

Colonel Milward was not satisfied until he had brought his godchild Daphne and the son of his friend together. His object was evident, although Mrs. Seymour expressed herself as being somewhat suspicious of the Colonel's introductions.

A year after the above events to the day, Absalom Jones wedded Daphne Seymour.

At the breakfast Trevor and the Colonel were next each other. It was a quiet corner, and no one heard the former whisper to the latter—

"That fellow Rayne once dubbed our bridegroom 'a rank outsider'; it's curious, Colonel, isn't it, that that too clever gentleman should unconsciously have been suggesting his own social epitaph."

"Very curious," echoed the Colonel.

Ralph Enderby.

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Left by the Express.

A Station-master's Story.

There was dead silence in the cottage of Will Haynes, the station-master. The station was a small one on a loop line, which had been opened for traffic rather more than four years, in the hope that the loop would develop into something important; but the cutting of the line had not worked the slightest effect in the development of the surrounding country, and the cottage and large garden were just a clearing in the edge of the wood, and as far from neighbouring cottages as it was when Mary Bird became Mrs. Haynes, and began life as the station-master's wife.

It was Sunday evening and an off-time for Haynes. After one o'clock no train stopped at that station, and only two trains passed through it. Haynes was seated on a stout wooden chair, which he had tilted, till the back rested against the wall next to the door-post. He was very comfortable, for it was a warm evening, and he was drowsy. Mary sat on the doorstep, her elbows on her knees and her face in her hands. Her back was towards the room, so Haynes could not see her face even when he turned his head.

"Your flowers look well, Mary," he remarked. He had said that twice already since dinner, but he wanted to make her talk and could think of nothing better to say.

"Pretty well," rejoined Mary wearily.

Silence again. Will Haynes was uneasy about this silence, so he made another attempt.

"The 'sturtiums are getting on, ain't they?"

"Yes."

"The peas is all right too, don't you think so?" ventured John again.

There was no answer, so John slowly let the front legs of his chair drop till they touched the floor, and then half-turned towards her.

"You feel a bit lonely?" he asked, with more tenderness than usual.

It had dawned upon him before that evening that Mary was not happy. She had been taught the trade of a tailoress as she phrased it, and while stitching away as a merry-hearted girl, she had conceived ambitious ideals, and had hoped for their realisation; but time went by and the realisation was as far off as ever. When Will Haynes came along and took a fancy to the bright-eyed, merry-speaking girl, and told her that he was to be the station-master of the little country station as soon as it was opened, telling her of the cottage and the garden and of his prospects, she resolved to accept his offer.

The little cottage appeared like a small paradise at first, and she was happy; but the aspect gradually changed. It was very lonely; her ideals faded one after another; and Will was a reserved man, saying little and outwardly cold. She maintained her merry ways at the beginning of their married life, but she fancied that Will did not care for them, and she ceased in her efforts to amuse. In point of fact, Will was much amused, but he made the common mistake of many husbands, and showed no gratitude, no warmth. Mary interpreted it wrongly, and became cold in turn and still less happy.

"You feel lonely at times?" queried Will once more, as she did not reply.

"There they come!" said Mary, with a quick jerk of her head in the direction where a curl of smoke was rendered visible in the growing darkness by the flame that accompanied it. "All enjoying themselves."

"The up-express," observed Will Haynes casually.

The headlight of the swiftly-running train was visible, and presently it dashed along the line at the end of the garden, the lights from its windows illuminating the night for a brief space.

"There they go!" cried Mary bitterly. "It's nice to be able to travel there and everywhere! I hate the people in those trains, when I see them pass; they can go about and see all kinds of sights and people, while we stick here and see nothing, day in, day out, in this forsaken place, alone nearly all the time, and nothing to do. I believe it's killing me!"

It was a struggle between rage and tears, and the former conquered for the time.

"It *is* a bit lonely," admitted Will, rather sadly. "Mary, why don't you go and sit with Blake's wife sometimes? That would be company."

"I don't like her, Will. Then the children make a noise, and she's always so taken up with the children."

"How many have they got now?" asked Will with a strange intonation in his voice.

"That last made four. They have a lot, and others——"

Mary was about to say that many other people had none, but she stopped. Will sighed, and Mary echoed the sigh unconsciously.

"Isn't there something you could do to make the time less tiring?" inquired Will helplessly.

"I could get some wool and knit things for the winter, but we can't spare the money, and we've got enough things for another three winters!" returned Mary angrily. "When I say as I've nothing to do, of course I can *make* work. I *have* to, or I should eat my heart out. I look at the trains and I see the happy people, and it hurts me so that I have to turn to and do some housework. I scrub the kitchen floor in the morning, and I often scrub it again in the afternoon. When those feelings come over me, I have to do something or I'd go mad, stark, staring mad! So I get the soap and water and scrubbing brush, and I work on that kitchen floor to relieve 'em!"

During the next few weeks his wife's fits of depression increased in frequency, for whenever he went in to the midday meal, he smelt fresh soap and the kitchen floor was damp; and in the evening it was the same smell, the same dampness, and he knew that the floor had been scrubbed at least twice that day. His own inability to create an interest for Mary served to irritate him still more, and he would go out as soon as he had finished eating, declaring that it was enough to drive him out of his home. He failed to understand that he would do more to bring happiness into the home by the exercise of patience.

It was Sunday evening once more; an autumn Sunday, with the night falling at an earlier hour. Will Haynes was standing moodily near the kitchen door, outside this time, while Mary was seated on the step. Both were staring blankly into the twilight. There had been angry words at tea-time.

"I'm going to watch the down-express pass," said Will suddenly.

He moved away. He did not wish to see the express pass; it was only an excuse to get away. Mary might be in a better mood when he returned.

He walked along the line for nearly a mile until he saw the train coming. The signal was against it, and it slowed down and stopped. This was rather a surprise for Will Haynes, but he supposed that the company was running

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an excursion on the main line where the loop joined further on, and excursions are always late. It was rather strange that expresses should be run on that loop at all, Will Haynes had thought when he first took up his duties, but he learnt that the line served as a connection with the system of another company, and it was considered policy to run them.

These thoughts were passing through Will's mind when he observed, in the dim light, a figure on the line near the bank. He saw the figure approach the train, and then he noticed that a carriage door was open. The figure climbed on to the foot-board and entered the carriage, shutting the door just as the train began to move. In half-a-dozen seconds the express was running past him with steadily-increasing speed.

Will was curious and made his way to the spot where he had noticed the dark form. There was something by the side of the line; it proved to be a large hamper. More curious than ever, Will cut the twine that secured the lid and began to examine its contents. He drew back with a suppressed cry, then emitted a whistle, and sat down to think it over.

"Yes, that will do it, if I work the thing all right," he said softly.

He took up the hamper in his strong arms and carried it to the cottage. Placing it on the floor, which, fortunately, had not been scrubbed since the morning, he called Mary, and, without answering her question, opened the lid and pulled aside a light cloth. In the hamper lay a baby, just beginning to wriggle and cry.

"Somebody's left it on the line," said Will simply, "so I thought I'd bring it here."

"I don't want other people's brats!" declared Mary harshly.

Will was nonplussed, but he contrived to hide the fact, and played his part very well.

"All right!" he said coolly. "I'll go and see the policeman in the village, and tell him. He must find somewhere for it to go. But I can't take the child with me, so I'm afraid I'll have to leave it here till I come back. S'pose you don't mind attending to it till then?"

Mary's face remained hard in expression, and Will glided out before she could reply. The baby began to whimper again, and then to cry lustily.

"Poor thing," murmured Mary softly. "It's hungry and cramped."

She took it up and soothed it by rocking it in her arms. She contrived to give it some milk and water, feeding it with little drops in a tea-spoon. Then it dropped into a slumber of peace and innocence, and Mary sat with it in her arms and waited.

It was nearly ten o'clock before Will returned, and he found Mary still sitting with the baby asleep in her arms. She held up her head with a warning expression on her face as he entered rather noisily with his heavy boots.

"S-s-sh! You'll wake her, Will!"

"Why didn't you put her in the bed?" inquired Will in a stage whisper. "Been holding her all this time?"

"I couldn't turn the clothes down without disturbing her," replied Mary in the same tone, "and she's so comfortable and easy-like here that I was afraid to venture. You can do it now."

Will moved across the kitchen to go to the bedroom, but he made so much noise that Mary stopped him.

"Hadn't you better take your boots off?" she demanded. "You'll wake her, sure enough!"

Will removed his heavy boots and together they stepped lightly into the bedroom, where he turned down the clothes, and she tenderly deposited her human burden.

"She looks all right there, don't she?" asked Will.

"Almost a pity she's got to go. I've had a talk with the village policeman, and he said at first as how he didn't think that she was found in this parish. We had an argyment about it, that's what made me so late. But it's all settled now, and he says she'll have to be taken to the infirmary or the workhouse, and that's ten miles off if it's an inch. Anyhow, she goes to-morrow."

Out of the corner of his eye Will watched the effect of his words. He saw Mary's face go white and her lips quiver. She gave one long look at the pretty bundle of humanity in the bed, and the next instant she was sobbing with her head on Will's shoulder.

"Must she go away, Will? Oh, can't we keep her?"

Will passed his arm round his wife; an irritating cough prevented him from speaking for nearly a minute, but he got the better of it at length.

"Yes, I should say so. She won't cost much to keep for a time, and I may get a lift up. I daresay the policeman won't be much upset at not having to take her to the workhouse."

"But, Will, I s'pose we *may* keep her?" inquired Mary, with sudden fear. "There isn't anything in the basket to say we mustn't?"

They looked in the hamper and overhauled its remaining contents, consisting of baby clothing. There was no note, no trace of identity.

"There's nothing agen it," said Will, "so we'll keep her."

"I can look after her," said Mary confidently. "I'll take care she doesn't get on the line."

"Ah, that reminds me!" exclaimed Will. "I must rig up a gate at the end of the garden to keep her off the line. I'll do it to-morrow!" he added quite seriously, as though he fancied that the baby would be running out on the line before they were aware of it if he were not quick about the task.

"What shall we call her?" inquired Mary, when they had returned to the kitchen. "I think it would be a good idea to give her a name that would remind us how she came. Suppose we call her Express, eh?"

Mary looked at him as if she had had an inspiration. Will shook his head doubtfully.

"Don't seem to be a very handy sort of name," he explained. "And we might mix it up with the trains. Never heard a girl called that, have you?"

"That wouldn't matter!" exclaimed Mary. "I don't see why such a darling as that should be bound to have a name that any other girl can have. Well," she continued, after a pause, "suppose we call her Pressie now? That's nice and handy, and it will remind us just the same."

So it was settled. They crept to the door of the bedroom and listened. No sound. They crept back again. Will put on a pair of light boots which he called his slippers, and together they went out into the garden. Their hands came together by some mysterious influence, and they stood drinking in the balmy air.

They looked up at the stars, they talked of their prospects—of what they would do for Pressie as she grew up, and how she would look when she was grown up. Everything was so different, so bright; life was so well worth living.

"Oh, I'm so glad she has come; I'm so happy, Will!" laughed Mary.

"I say, you haven't left the bedroom window too wide open, have you?" asked Will in sudden alarm. "We don't want her to catch cold. And you mustn't scrub the kitchen floor so much, you know, or she'll——"

"I shan't want to, you silly man!" laughed Mary.

It was so pleasant to hear her laugh! The whole world was changed for her; she had tasted the sweets of motherhood.

Will Payne.

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A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCESHIP.

A Seaside Meeting, a Parting, and a Reunion.

"Then you do not think it very dreadful of me, talking to you without an introduction?"

"Not I. Why should I? It would be impossible to look upon anyone as dreadful in whose delightful company I felt such pleasure." Then there was a laugh upon both sides, and a mock bow on the part of the first speaker in acknowledgment of the compliment. It was the seaside, and these two were feeling the delightful sensation of freedom from everyday formalities met with in the ordinary humdrum life of a large city—hence this meeting. He was a young man of about twenty-seven. She was a girl of about twenty-two, very pretty and full of fun. It was a case of mutual attraction. He longed to know her, she wished to know him. As no one came forward to introduce them—well, there they were on their holidays, what could it matter if they dispensed with that form just for once; the chances were they would never meet again. That was what she thought—he hoped otherwise.

"You cannot think," she said, "what a bore it is coming away with only an aunt—and an old maid at that—to look after you."

"I can quite understand," he answered; "almost as bad as going on your honeymoon in company of your mother-in-law, as well as your bride. They must both be in the way."

She laughed.

"Auntie will be frightfully distressed when she knows I have spoken to you,."

"Then don't tell her."

"Oh! but I told her I was going to speak to you, and the poor old soul preached at me for over an hour."

"Poor little girl."

"Thank you. She has all sorts of notions, you know; she says a fellow has no respect for a girl who will allow him to talk to her without proper introduction; do tell me that's not true."

"My dear girl, that's all nonsense, in one sense at least; it depends on the girl. Let me try to explain. Now, there are plenty of girls, empty headed things, who come away for a holiday with the one intention of speaking to any fellow who will speak to them; anything is good enough so long as it is a man. Now, those girls I have no respect for from the start. Then, there are girls like yourself. You did not come away with the intention of speaking to anyone you did not know; at least, that is what I think. You found it intolerably dull, and I flatter myself that I don't look as though I was satisfied with anything. You saw, I daresay, that I wanted to know you; what happened? I venture to hope something like this—'Old aunt a bore, no one here I know or care about, somebody there seems as though he would like to know me—perhaps pleasant company,' and—well—here we are."

"Yes, you are quite right; that was exactly how I looked at it."

"I knew it, therefore, how could I look upon you with disrespect? I should be sorry to think that after you leave me you would be at once with another; but I know you will not do so, therefore it is all right."

"Hadn't we better know each other's names? It would be more convenient, don't you think so?"

"Certainly. Gilbert Somers is mine; but stay, I have a card. And yours?"

"Kitty Dunstan. I like Gilbert awfully—and, oh! you come from London, so do I." She blushed, and seemed rather disturbed. He did not notice, however.

"Do you? How jolly; we may meet again at home. I'm awfully glad."

"But London is such a big place, we may not after all, you know."

"Don't be unkind. You would like to meet, would you not?"

"Oh, yes, I hope we shall; but really we ought to change the subject; we must have been talking nonsense for the last hour."

"I like this kind of nonsense, one gets tired of being serious in town; but what shall we talk about?"

"Anything you like—the place, the people. Do you like it, and what kind of people do you like best?"

"If I answered that, we should be getting personal once more. Try again."

"Then how goes the enemy?"

"The time you mean? Half-past twelve."

"Then I must fly, lunch at one, you know, and auntie gets so wild if I keep her waiting. No, you must not come with me."

"We meet this afternoon in Devonshire Park, don't we?"

"If I can get rid of auntie—three o'clock—*au revoir*. And she put out a little gloved hand.

"*Au revoir*," he said, giving it an affectionate little squeeze.

Gilbert remained seated for some time after she had left him, considering himself a lucky fellow. He was not as a rule impulsive, but there was something in the girl that attracted him from the first moment he saw her; and now—although they had known each other for so short a time, he knew that he was head over ears in love for the first time in his life. He felt very happy—Eastbourne had never seemed so pleasant—and he walked back to his hotel in a very contented frame of mind.

Gilbert Somers was a lucky fellow, blest in no small measure by the world's goods. He was wealthy, good looking, and easy tempered; a very charming companion, and yet he had remained single. He was not easily satisfied; he liked girls' society immensely, but he was careful in his choice. Kitty Dunstan appealed to him as no other girl had done. She was so fresh, with a most winning and charming manner, and a lady evidently brought up in the best society. He laughed often at his good luck, and felt in the best of tempers.

The weather was kind enough to assist his enjoyment, and they sat in one of the most secluded seats in one of the delightful paths of Devonshire Park, the world was a delightful place to these two. While the band discoursed sweet music from the music garden they talked more nonsense.

"Auntie wanted me to go for a drive this afternoon," she said. "I was terribly afraid I should have to go."

"How did you get out of it?"

"I told her I was in love with the first violin, and that he was going to play a solo for my especial benefit, so that I was bound to come. That was not a lie—the latter part, I mean. Auntie hates music, so I knew she wouldn't come with me. I shock her dreadfully, I'm afraid."

"A capital excuse. I shall have to ask that first violin to dine with me, if he is going to do many good turns like this. How did you know him?"

She laughed.

"Oh, another of my informal acquaintances; he fell over my parasol the other afternoon, and apologised profusely, so I told him he must do penance. He was very humble. I told him he must play one of my favourite pieces, and he is going to oblige this afternoon."

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"How nice. I wish I could do something for you."

"Oh, I can easily give you something to do, if you wish it."

"Please do."

"Talk auntie round to more modern views; she is such a Puritan, you can't think. If you could do that, I should be everlastingly grateful."

He sighed.

"The twelve labours of Hercules rolled into one," he answered. "I am afraid my powers of persuasion are not very good. If you will give me the opportunity I will try."

"How brave of you. Well, you shall try. We shall be on the Parade this evening. I will introduce you."

"And I will try to acquit myself well for your sake."

"Thank you, Gilbert," she answered.

"How nice of you, Kitty, to use that name. I had no notion it could be made so pretty. Don't call me anything else any more."

She held up a warning finger.

"We are talking nonsense again; let us talk of the people. Oh! there is my first violin; let us go and listen. I am sure he will be sorry if he does not see me."

Gilbert was introduced to Miss Dunstan's aunt, Miss Selby, in the evening, and tried to make himself agreeable.

He was left alone with her shortly after, Kitty going into the town for something.

"I do hope, Mr. Somers, my niece has not shocked you, for I'm sure I do not know what to do sometimes, she seems to have no idea of propriety."

Gilbert laughed to himself at Miss Selby's idea of propriety, whilst he promptly did his best to allay her fears.

"I should not mind so much," continued she, "but I do think that when a girl is engaged she should behave with more caution."

Gilbert started. His heart sank; he felt as though he had received a blow from an invisible hand. "Engaged! engaged!—Kitty, I mean, Miss Dunstan—engaged?"

"Yes. A good match for him, too. Kitty has money, he has not; but if she loves him, that is the great thing. You did not know, then? Engaged, oh, yes."

Poor Gilbert, it was a blow to him. He did not wait for Kitty. With more haste than was perhaps in accordance with politeness, he bade Miss Selby good-night, and walked moodily down the Parade in the depths of melancholy.

He felt hardly against the girl at first. Was she playing with him, was she as innocent as she looked; did she take pleasure in tampering with men's affections? No, she could not mean to delude him. Perhaps it was his own fault; he should have taken it as it was meant—a chance acquaintanceship, and nothing more. It was done now. He allowed himself to fall in love, and it was not easy to climb out.

He walked to his hotel, and sat down to write to Kitty.

"My dear Miss Dunstan," he wrote, "I am the unhappy recipient of a piece of news this evening that seems at once to have altered the whole course of my life. This, you may guess, is the knowledge of your engagement. For your sake, my dear girl, I cannot feel sorry, and from the bottom of my heart I wish you every happiness. It is, perhaps, wrong of me, under the circumstances, to say that during the brief time we have been acquainted, you have become more and more to me, and I feel it very sorely that we must end our friendship.

"I say we must end it, not that I blame you; but you seem now to have become so much a part of my life that I think it better that we should not meet again. As our lives must now lie in different ways, your presence would only make me long for that which I see now can never be.

"Forgive me if I pain you in any way by this letter. I shall remember the last few days as amongst the happiest of my life, and I can never forget you. With every wish for your future happiness, Believe me, yours sincerely,

"Gilbert Somers."

Kitty was angry with her aunt for telling Gilbert about her engagement, but, on the receipt of his letter, she saw where she had made the mistake, and she broke down utterly. She never thought, in her careless way, that there was a possibility of Gilbert falling in love with her; she only felt the pleasure of his company; she had not meant to be unkind. Now she saw what she had done, and shed bitter tears of repentance. Out of a pleasant little comedy had come a tragedy that she had never dreamt of. With trembling hand and in true penitence she wrote back—

"My Dear Mr. Somers,—I hardly know how to write an answer to your letter. I did not know what I was doing; I should not have spoken. I little foresaw this. You ask me for my forgiveness. It is I that should ask yours. My aunt was right in a way, and a way I did not think of. There is only one thing I beg of you; do not think I meant to trifle with you; I never thought you would care for me beyond a seaside acquaintance. I see I have much to learn, but why should I have to learn my lesson at your expense? Why should you suffer that I might be taught? In *you* I have nothing to forgive. In *me* you have everything. Try and forget me. Let me go out of your life; and, oh, forgive me if you can. Thank you for your wishes for my happiness. At present it seems in the distance. Good-bye.—Yours sincerely and repentant, "Kitty Dunstan."

Another letter passed between them, and then it seemed as though they had passed out of each other's lives for good.

Gilbert returned to town, but his spirit for the time appeared crushed. He took no interest in anything. It was the first time he had been in love, and it took too great a hold upon him to be thrown off at once.

He had no business to go back to, to take him out of himself, which was bad; and he kept to his own society, and brooded over his trouble, which was worse.

He was for a time, in his own estimation, the most miserable man in London. He was getting over the worst, and was beginning to mix with his fellow-creatures again. And one evening, in the beginning of November, found him indulging in a dinner at the "Trocadero."

He was sitting at a table with a friend he had not seen for a considerable time, and they were discussing the most expensive menu and old times. A couple of bottles of champagne in ice by the table proved that the world was favourably inclined towards them. Gilbert had not much affection for his friend, Jack Wilson, but was enjoying his dinner, and the conversation, as an accompaniment, went well.

"By-the-bye," said Wilson, in the course of conversation, "did I tell you I was engaged, Gilbert?"

"No, my dear chap. Let me congratulate you."

"Thanks, awfully. It's rather a lucky thing for me; there's plenty of money flying round in her quarter."

"Lucky man. I suppose you are awfully fond of her, Jack?"

"Oh, well, I suppose I am in a way; she is good enough to like me; never was given to be sentimental myself, you know, but as there was money at the end of it, I went in and won."

Gilbert looked serious. He did not like this kind of thing. He hated the idea of marriage for money; but he felt he must take an interest now for his friend's sake.

"And who is the girl, may I ask?"

"Kitty Dunstan. I don't know whether you know her? What's the matter, old man! You're not ill, are you?"

Gilbert had turned white, and had dropped his spoon and fork upon his plate, which caused a little jump from several diners at neighbouring tables.

"No, the room's very warm, and these sweets are rather rich. I'll have some wine to pull me up." He drank two glasses straight off and seemed better. "Kitty Dunstan," he said, "yes I have met her. Look here"—he said, suddenly rising—"don't you

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hurry. I'm going to the door to get some fresh air; it's too hot in here. Come when you're finished."

Gilbert was in a worse position now than before. He would have borne up, believing that she was going to be happy, but how could he remain silent and let the girl he loved better than his life marry a man who cared practically nothing for her, only for what she would bring him.

It was terrible, yet what could he do!

He dare not tell her himself; he couldn't, it was unbearable. He at last decided it was impossible for him to do anything. He would go abroad, travel anywhere, and try to forget.

He did not see Wilson again. He dare not trust himself, and a month or two went by whilst he made arrangements for his tour.

It was about the middle of January, and Gilbert was sitting alone in his dismantled room the evening prior to his departure.

A servant entered, with a card upon a silver tray. He took it absently, but paled, and caught his breath as he read the name of Miss Dunstan.

Why, oh, why, did she come?

To see her would bring back memories he was doing his best to forget. But he could not send her away, and so he asked for her to be shown in.

He rose as she entered, and noticed that she was prettier than ever, though pale; and she looked as if she had been crying.

"Gilbert," she said, "you will forgive me for coming. You are going away, I know, and I wanted to see you before you went. I am in trouble, and I wanted sympathy."

"My dear little girl, what on earth is the matter? And why do you come to me—not that I wouldn't do anything for you—I shall always be ready to help you—but is there not someone else you ought to go to?"

"No! No! Gilbert." And her voice trembled. "He does not love me—not myself; it is only my money, and I am miserable."

Gilbert felt as though a load had been lifted from him. He felt happier, in spite of her trouble, than he had been for months past.

"Kitty, you know it. I am very sorry for you. I have known it some time, that is why I am going away. I could not bear to see you married to him."

"You have known it! Oh, then, why did you not tell me? You would have let me marry him, and you knew he did not love me. Oh, how could you!" And she burst into tears.

"Kitty, listen," he said, sitting down beside her and taking her hand. "How was it possible for me to tell you? I hardly think you would have believed me. Your aunt, everyone would have thought I was doing it for the sake of breaking off your engagement for my own ends. No, I couldn't have told you; do you not see that, Kitty?"

"Yes! Yes! Of course you could not. I heard it from his own lips. I was at a dance and was sitting out with my partner, when I heard Jack's voice from behind a screen. He was talking to another fellow, and about me. I could not help but listen. It was very hard for me. He said love was not a part of his nature—money was more in his line. Then his friend laughed and said he was a lucky fellow. Jack laughed too, and said 'yes, I rather think I am!' It came to an end that night. I shall never speak to him again."

"Thank God!" was Gilbert's muttered ejaculation. Aloud he said "Poor little girl, I am so sorry for you."

"I knew you would be, that was why I came. I wanted your sympathy. Auntie wouldn't give me any. She said I was foolish to give him up. Oh! I hated her then, and then I came to say good-bye." She looked up at Gilbert, and her voice trembled: "You are going away?"

"Why am I going away?" he exclaimed. "Kitty, it depends on you. Will you send me away? Ours was a chance acquaintance, cannot it ripen into something deeper? Kitty, you know I love you. I thought never to be able to tell you that again. Must I go?"

"I think you must go," she said. Then looked up at him and smiled. "But not to-morrow—wait awhile—and we needn't take auntie with us, unless you like."

Baxter Thompson.

Is Your Birthday This Week?

We have just secured the services of a well-known astrologer, and below will be found his prophecies for this week's birthdays.

August 12.—An unfortunate anniversary; go carefully in business. Some sickness in the family circle.

Those in love will have crosses and opposition, especially if born in the early morning, or from six to nine p.m.

The day is rather favourable to buy and sell from eight a.m. to five p.m. Deal with professional persons in the afternoon.

A child born to-day will be ambitious, generous, and cheerful. It will experience much sorrow, and be subject to accidents.

August 13.—Those whose birthdays fall to-day will have a year of change. Some grief in the family circle.

Girls will have many annoyances in love and domestic affairs; will need to be cautious with strangers as some deceit is shown.

The day is good for asking favours, seeking work, travelling, and introductions. Not good for love affairs and marriage.

A child born to-day will be fortunate and make its way in life.

August 14.—Men born on this day should not speculate; with care business will succeed.

A quiet time with love affairs. Girls receive good news from absent lovers.

A child born to-day should keep in employ. The mind will be active, witty, and ingenious. Fond of travel and literature.

August 15.—Not a fortunate year for business to those who celebrate their birthdays to-day. Farmers, builders, and landlords need care in their dealings.

Girls born from eight to nine p.m. will meet with deceit and trouble in love affairs. Many curious experiences.

The day is evil for letter writing, asking favours, removing, or for letting property. Defer travelling, and avoid law.

A child born to-day will be secretive, cunning, and difficult to know. Rather fortunate if born about noon.

August 16.—An unsettled birthday; the year will bring change and anxiety. Guard against quarrels and mishaps. Insure against fires.

Those in love, both sexes, will have trouble and disappointment.

A child born to-day will be suspicious, untidy, hot-tempered, and subject to mishaps. If a girl she will have an unhappy marriage.

August 17.—A quiet year; things proceed as usual. Some discord with friends or professional persons.

Girls need extra care with the opposite sex; some deceit and attentions from married men.

A child born to-day will have a quiet life. Will be clever and artistic, but abrupt and hold some strange beliefs.

August 18.—A good year for business for those whose birthdays come on this day. Friends will be useful.

Girls should seek introductions and new friends. Those who were born in the early morning will have chances of marriage.

A child born here will rise in life. Will be generous, affectionate, ingenious, and inventive. Will make friends easily.

Asturel.

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A PRESCRIPTION FOR TWO.

Which Brought Happiness to Both Doctor and Patient.

Doctor Gilman rapped briskly on the front door, and drew the collar of his fur coat higher to shut out the sharp north wind. Inside the house there was a moment's confusion, and then Mrs. Green, assisted by six little Greens, opened the door.

"Why, doctor!" she cried in surprise. The little Greens lined up, and held their mouths open.

"The governess, I hear, is ill." Doctor Gilman announced the fact deliberately. He stepped into the hall, holding his medicine case in one hand, while, with the other, he made an opening in the line of little Greens.

Mrs. Green closed the door and protested. "The governess is here, but she isn't ill. That is, no more'n usual. She's always ailing," in a disparaging voice. "Did she send for you?"

The doctor ignored her question. He threw off his fur coat, picked up his medicine case again, and asked calmly, "Where is she?"

"In the sitting room," replied Mrs. Green, her arms akimbo. Instantly six small voices cried, "In here," and the noisy troop made a dash for a weary-looking figure lying on the couch near the fire-place.

Doctor Gilman paid no attention to the figure on the couch. He blocked the entrance against Mrs. Green, and said firmly, "Come children, I'm here to visit the sick only."

The Greens, unused to obeying, looked sulky.

"Hurry up," came the doctor's strong, cheerful voice, and as they filed slowly past him, casting longing glances behind, he added. "Now don't let me see one of you back here again until my visit ends." His glance included both mother and children.

Then he closed the door, drew a chair in front of the couch, and sat down.

"I have come to prescribe for you, Miss Eggy," he said, looking for the first time at the girl on the couch.

At his abrupt entrance, Becky Eggy had sat up. She leant an elbow against the back of the couch, and rested her throbbing head on her hand. She was perplexed at this unasked call from Doctor Gilman.

Life was always offering perplexities to Becky Eggy. The first had been her queer little name, and the last and greatest was what to do with her queer little self.

At least, Becky Eggy thought she must be a queer little self because everything she loved had been taken away, and so many things she did not love had been substituted, while she stood by, powerless to shape her life. In the midst of such great perplexities, Doctor Gilman's visit was the least.

"I am not ill, doctor," she replied in a wondering tone.

Doctor Gilman smiled inscrutably at the fire, and held his palms up to the warmth. Then he turned suddenly, and looked keenly at Becky Eggy. She fidgeted nervously with her black dress with one transparent hand. What was going to happen? Had he come to tell her she must give up her little school? Poor little Becky Eggy! What would become of her then?

All her faults swept in order before her; she could not make the big boys mind. How was that possible, when she had not strength enough even to shake the little ones? Her head ached so badly she often had to rest it on the desk; perhaps he had heard how, only a few days before, she was so tired she had insisted that six times eight are fifty-four. Sitting there before Dr. Gilman, she felt painfully ignorant and weak.

She looked at the doctor's hand lying on his knee. Once, when she had been so ill that even she was obliged to admit the fact, he had taken her head between his hands and pressed the ache out and she had slept.

As if in response to the memory, the doctor leant forward and laid his hand a moment, in his most professional manner, on her hot forehead. Then he leant back in his chair and said in a most unprofessional tone, "Tired little Becky Eggy!"

She rested her head against the high back of the couch, and hastily closed her eyes, but not until the doctor saw the gathering tears. He scanned the thin face and the shabby black dress with a curious expression on his face. Then he said abruptly, "So you are not ill?"

Becky shook her head. She could not trust herself to speak after the sympathy in the doctor's voice as he said, "Tired little Becky Eggy."

But his voice was not sympathetic now. It was brusque. "People who are well usually have a little colour in their faces and plumpness in their cheeks."

"It's walking so far in the snow and cold," said Becky faintly.

"You are not strong enough to walk. You ought to ride."

Becky attempted to smile. "But the 'ought' doesn't provide the horses."

"It does in this case," still more abruptly.

Becky's eyes opened widely now in spite of the tears. Doctor Gilman was incomprehensible. She made no reply, and he seemed to expect none. "Your school worries you, does it not? The big boys are a tiresome lot."

Becky gasped. It was the school after all. She dropped her eyes and a pitiful expression came into her face. Her voice faltered.

"I'll try to do better, doctor. You see, I am not strong enough to punish them. Perhaps, if I tried harder, I could manage all right—I'll try——" There was a choke in her voice.

Doctor Gilman looked at the thin hands moving nervously on the black skirt, and at Becky's strained, anxious face. She did not look equal to the emergency of managing even the smallest Green!

The doctor's lips smiled, but not his eyes. They filled as they looked into Becky's and her perplexity increased. His abrupt tone vanished, and his next words were very gentle:

"Will you take my prescription?"

She glanced down at the medicine chest on the floor, and said submissively, "Are you going to give me a tonic?"

Doctor Gilman laughed a little and pushed the medicine case away with his foot. "I brought that with me as a bulwark against the Greens."

Becky responded with a smile, and went on more cheerfully "I am willing to take everything you advise, doctor."

Doctor Gilman suddenly sat up very straight. "I prescribe a home——" He was looking at the fire now, but he saw Becky's lip quiver and her hands touch her black dress, "and care and—love."

"No, no," she whispered, "you know, perhaps you do not know—they are all gone. There is no one left except me."

Doctor Gilman looked at her with a smile which made his rugged face beautiful. "But it's my home I'm prescribing, dear little Becky Eggy, and my care, and my love. If they could bring you happiness——" The doctor did not finish the sentence, but looked wistfully at Becky.

She gazed at the fire now. Its warmth seemed to have settled, suddenly, around her heart. She had felt so useless a few moments before, so shorn of all womanly power and dignity. Now, her soul suddenly expanded in the knowledge of a satisfying love.

She looked up shyly, and said hesitatingly, "if your home and your—love—would bring me happiness, would I be the only one benefited by your prescription?"

"Dear little girl," said Doctor Gilman. He bent and kissed her face, soft in a new pink glow. "It's useless to confess that I have been prescribing for myself all the while."

A. Lee.

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THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

Revelations in High Life by a Lady's Companion.

The writer of this series of true stories acted for many years in the capacity of lady's companion to a Society adventuress who lived by robbing her unsuspecting guests. Names have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but the facts are correct.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Mrs. NORTON	An adventuress who makes her money by robbing her friends.
CYNTHIA	Her cousin and companion who, when the events related below took place, was quite unsuspicious of Mrs. Norton's guilt.
FLUFFY	An accomplice of Mrs. Norton's.
LORD KINROSS	One of Mrs. Norton's most devoted admirers.
SIR JOHN STRICKLAND	A poor baronet who is deeply in love with Mrs. Norton.
MARY VERNON	At one time engaged to be married to Lord Kinross.
HIRAM PETTIGREW .	An American millionaire.
PERCIVAL HOPE . . .	Pettigrew's secretary.

Mrs. Norton: Adventuress.

Cynthia: Her companion.

THE MAN FROM JAMAICA.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW READERS.

CYNTHIA tells in the opening chapter of her arrival at her cousin's in the capacity of companion, and of her discovery that Mrs. Norton is taking part in midnight card games, at which large sums of money are being lost and won. The climax is reached one night when Mary Vernon stakes her diamond ear-rings (a gift from Lord Kinross) and one of the onlookers finds them to be paste. The diamonds, it appears, were stolen by Mrs. Norton. A few weeks later the notorious Mrs. Norton, with Fluffy's help, succeeds in stealing a pocket-book, containing about eight thousand pounds in paper money, from Hiram Pettigrew at the Café Regal, by substituting for the millionaire's pocket-book one exactly like it. Mrs. Norton now moves into her new house in Pont Street, and it is while here that Sir John Strickland, a poor baronet, proposes to her. She refuses, but hints to him that if he will consent to allow his name to appear on the directorate of certain companies he will be bound to make money, and then her answer might be different. Mrs. Norton is next presented at Court by her friend, Lady Gaveston. For this function she wears some superb diamonds which have been lent her by Lord Kinross. The Society papers declare her to be the most beautiful and best-dressed woman at the presentation. The same evening Lord Kinross calls at Pont Street for a private interview, and it is during this interview that Percival Hope enters the room unannounced, and makes the startling statement that Mary Vernon has discovered the thief who stole her diamonds. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Norton leaves the room, Cynthia however stays, unknown to Kinross and Percival Hope. While there she overhears Hope, who turns out to be Kinross' cousin, tell Kinross that in a fortnight's time he will prove to Kinross that Mrs. Norton is an adventuress living upon the proceeds of the robbery of her friends. Cynthia tells Mrs. Norton what she has overheard. On the evening of the next day Lady Gaveston tells Mrs. Norton that she doesn't approve of her behaviour towards Sir John Strickland, and that unless she decides at once either to marry or refuse him, she will return to Scotland. Mrs. Norton asks for and obtains a fortnight's grace in which to make up her mind. Mrs. Norton and Cynthia go to the Derby, where Mrs. Curtis Blount, instigated by jealousy, entices Cynthia to bet heavily, by which she loses £800. Mrs. Norton has also lost heavily, and to pay her own and Cynthia's debts, she prevails upon a young fellow, by promising marriage, to sign his uncle's name to a bill for £5,000. That same night at the Duchess of Warminster's ball, Mrs. Norton comes face to face with a man from Jamaica who knows all about her past life.

FOR a moment I thought Frankie was going to faint, the next, however, her power of will came into play. She dropped my arm, drew herself up, forced a smile to her lips, and with a self-command wonderful to witness, gaily disclaimed any feeling of ill-health or fatigue.

"I've been waltzing too much," she said to her agitated and concerned admirers, "and am just a little giddy. Indeed, it's nothing else, and you mustn't trouble any more about me. I'll rest the next dance, if you don't mind"—she smiled sweetly at her partner—"and Cynthia will take care of me."

She passed quickly from the room. Percival Hope and his companion remained behind.

Going swiftly down the corridor Frankie made her way to a seat well screened by flowers and ferns from observation.

"Cynthia," she said abruptly, "you've got to do something for me. Yes, it's in connection with that man. I must see him alone; speak to him if only for five minutes."

"Shall I tell him to come to you, Frankie?"

She drew me back impetuously.

"No, no, that would never do. Percival Hope doesn't mean to let him out of sight if he can help it, but you will have to make him."

"How?"

"You must go to Percival and talk to him, smile, laugh, jest, make love to him—do anything to get him out of the way, if only for five minutes. You can do it if you like, Cynthia. If I know anything of men, Hope won't need much persuasion to flirt with you. Your face always attracted him, and to-night you're looking at your best."

"Frankie, I can't! I don't know what to say."

She took me by the arm.

"You've *got* to," she said fiercely. "Listen, if I don't see that man to-night, alone, the game's up. I'm done for—

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ruined—and you with me. I tell you he knows things about me in Jamaica, things that will smash me utterly if they get about. Hope brought him here to-night to identify me, and is going to buy his knowledge to ruin me. But give me the chance of seeing, of speaking to him by myself and I'll defeat Hope yet. In five minutes, five minutes I can turn him round my finger. Don't I know—haven't I won every man I wanted to all my life? Only one I couldn't make a fool of, and he——" She paused—"he is in your hands. Go, go quickly. Get Hope out of the way and leave the rest to me. You won't fail me Cynthia? Promise."

"I'll do my best," I stammered, "but——"

"If you fail," she said quickly, "I shall kill myself. Now you know what to expect."

She pushed me from her as she spoke, and, too frightened to protest I went towards the ballroom. How I wished the corridor was twice, no, twenty times as long! How I longed to be anywhere in the wide world but there.

I have never experienced such mental confusion and discomfort as I suffered in the next few minutes. I was weighed down by the thought of what I had to do, even while I rebelled at having to go through it.

What could be more humiliating! I was to induce, if needs be, force, Percival Hope into conversation with me; he, whom at our last meeting I had dismissed with such indignant scorn.

As I approached the ballroom the band struck up a waltz. A young fellow came towards me quickly.

"Our dance, I think, Miss Hamilton," he said pleasantly. "I've been searching for you everywhere."

I felt myself turn crimson. It was impossible for me to dance with him. And yet what excuse could I make?

In my distress I fell back upon the truth, or rather part of it.

"If you don't mind I'd rather not dance this number, I want to stand here and watch instead."

"It's cooler on the stairs or in the conservatory," he suggested.

"I'm not tired," I explained, "but I want to stay here."

He looked surprised but made no further protest. Side by side we stood—just in the doorway. Amidst the crowd of dancers Percival Hope's great height made him conspicuous. He was standing by the window talking to Mary Vernon.

I stared hard at him but he either did not or would not see me. Once indeed he flashed a look in my direction, but when I smiled in answer, he deliberately turned his head. I bit my lips, colouring with mortification.

My companion regarded me, I thought, with suppressed amusement. More than one man glanced at me curiously—I fancy I must have looked distressed—and Chesterton, who was dancing with Mrs. Blount, positively frowned as he passed by. The situation was intolerable. I could not remain longer where I was, gaped at by people who should have known better. Time was passing, at any moment Percival might leave, and with him the man from Jamaica. And then——

An inspiration seized me. "I want to speak to Miss Vernon," I said to my partner, "can you pilot me across the room? She's sitting over there next to that tall man by the window."

"Do you mean Hope," said the youth. "Yes, I'll take you with pleasure."

Mary greeted me very nicely, she smiled and made room for me on the window seat. Percival bowed gravely and became interested in the ceiling.

"Aren't you going to speak to me, Mr. Hope?" I said at last. "I've been expecting you all the evening; indeed, I've kept a dance for you—but if you're going to be cross!" I showed him my programme as I spoke, with one vacant number. "Aren't you grateful?"

He looked at me with such a puzzled air, but I smiled quite steadily and motioned him to sit beside me, moving my skirts with a little gesture I had learnt from Frankie.

"Do you think my frock is pretty?" I went on, "or do you like me best in pink? You remember my pink dress surely—you sent me some roses to match."

"I remember quite well," he said slowly. "What a sweet, shy convent girl I thought you. I think, Miss Cynthia, all things considered, I liked you best in pink."

"Is that why you did not send me any flowers to-day?" I asked.

He gazed at me very earnestly.

"Would you have worn them?" he said anxiously.

"I wore your roses."

"But things were different then."

"Is it so much more difficult to like me now?" I whispered.

For a moment he made no reply. I glanced at him quickly, but what I saw in his face made me turn my head, my cheeks hot with shame. Mary Vernon, a surprised look in her eyes, had walked away. My late partner had also disappeared. Percival and I were left together.

I took a swift glance up and down the room. The man from Jamaica had drifted some distance from where we sat and was standing disconsolately alone. Through the doorway at the far end I caught a glimpse of Frankie. She was leaning on Sir Gregory's arm, and was walking towards—yes, towards the man from Jamaica.

At all costs I must keep Percival from seeing her, from stopping her. I leant back, the window curtains shading me from the room.

Percival leant towards me.

"It is—difficult, Cynthia," he said at last.

"Do you wish so much to dislike me?" I asked.

"I desire more to love you," he replied, and moved closer, resting his arm behind me on the lounge.

"And yet you think me frivolous, shallow?" said I, fencing desperately.

"I am not in the mood to discuss your faults. I like better to look at your face. Look at me, Cynthia."

He took my hands and turned me gently towards him. I forced myself to meet his eyes, and read therein that which for the moment made me forget all things, save that we two were together; forget that I was holding him by trickery, keeping him by stratagem, playing with him and with his love—for what? I remembered then, remembered that I was fighting for time, that my cousin might save herself—she had said it—from disgrace, and at the cost of honour, self-respect, love, ay, *his* love, I must play the game to the end, fight it to a finish.

"I have not thought you cared for me much," I said.

He sighed impatiently. "Things have been against us," he said, "and are still. I had not meant to speak to you while you were with your cousin, but Fate has willed it otherwise. You have thought me harsh and cruel in the past, Cynthia, you may have occasion to do so again, but I would ask you to trust me, to believe that I act for the best, so far as I can see it, and always in sympathy and tenderness to you. Indeed, my thoughts are much for you, and all my love. Will you have me, Cynthia?"

I have no words to paint the tenderness, the gentleness in his voice, no words could tell the sorrow in my heart, that I could not freely give to him the trust, the confidence that he invited, that I could not gladly, proudly accept his love.

"I am impatient, dear, I want your answer," he took my hand. I let it lie unresisting in his clasp, and for a moment we sat silent.

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CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

New Series of Stories.

My cousin had reached the man from Jamaica, and was speaking to him; he flushed at her approach, and glanced round apprehensively for Percival. Thank Heaven, the curtains sheltered him from view; thank Heaven, his face was turned to me so that he could not see the man's imploring look. My cousin smiled, the man grew quieter, more composed, gradually yielded to her fascination, and—yes, followed her from the room.

My eyes fixed on the clock, I sat wound up to bear what might ensue in the next five minutes. Never did the seconds tick so slowly. Five minutes—it was an age, eternity.

"I am waiting for your answer, Cynthia."

"A minute longer," I said, trembling, "a minute." The time was up and I was free to speak.

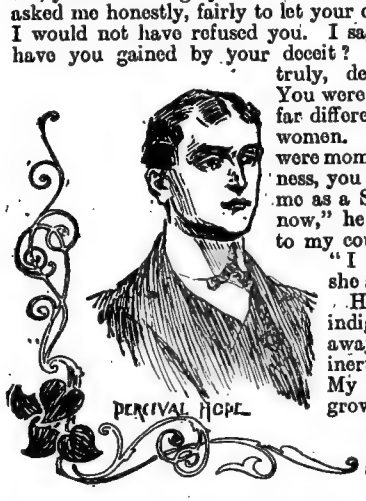
"I couldn't marry a man who tried to make Frankie unhappy," I said slowly. "If you would think and act differently towards her——" I paused, anxiously watching his face. "Promise me that from this evening you will let her be and *then*," I laid my hand upon his arm. "Poor Frankie," I said softly, "haven't you any pity?"

For a while he made no answer; he was, I think, softened by what I said, for his eyes were quite tender. It may be that he would have given the promise that I asked, and so have altered both our lives. But on the instant, as he was about to speak, he caught a glimpse of Frankie gazing eagerly in our direction. He looked from her to me, then with a flash of comprehension, glanced quickly round the room searching, I felt it, for the man from Jamaica!

Wrath on his face he turned upon me. Instinctively I shrank from him towards my cousin.

He pulled me back quite roughly into the shadow of the curtains.

"So you've been fooling me," he said, in a hard, grating voice, "leading me on, idiot that I am, from one crass stupidity to another. A dupe, is that it? A dupe to your innocent face and childish ways, a fool who has plucked out his heart for you to kick at. Oh, you have played your part to admiration. You have hood-winked me to the top of your bent. Do you think I don't see through it all, understand the whole mean business from beginning to end? Your cousin wanted to get hold of Casellis, the man that I brought here to-night, and you, as her decoy, were told off to befool me. You have succeeded to perfection! I congratulate you on your ready wit, your aptitude for learning how to cheat is wonderful. No, you shall *not* go yet. I have still more to say. Had you asked me honestly, fairly to let your cousin speak to Casellis, I would not have refused you. I say it, I mean it. What have you gained by your deceit? I loved you, Cynthia, truly, deeply, as a man can. You were to me something apart, far different from, above all other women. My thoughts of you were moments of exquisite tenderness, you were sweet and fresh to me as a Spring morning. And now," he broke off and pointed to my cousin. "*Now*," he said, "I realise that you and she are hideously alike."



He flashed a last look of indignation, then turned away. I sank limp and inert on to the window-seat. My limbs seemed to have grown powerless, and I felt stunned. I watched the dancers in a dull, unapprehending fashion, and wondered they could be so happy and light-hearted. I did not seem to feel anger at Percival's injustice, nor resentment at Frankie's selfishness. I was dazed with pain and misery, and could not analyse my sensations. Only I longed greatly for a quiet place where I could suffer alone.

A peremptory signal from Frankie roused me.

I got up and wearily made my way towards her.

"You're looking tired," she said, "come with me and have something to eat. I've secured chicken and champagne for you."

She drew me into an ante-room, put me in a chair, and forced me to eat.

"You've done awfully well, Cynthia, and I'm very grateful to you. I've talked Casellis over, and he's consented to give Percival the slip if I pay him a thousand pounds. But he'll only wait until twelve o'clock to-morrow. If he doesn't have the money then he'll go to Hope and give me away, lock, stock, and barrel. Never mind what he knows—it's quite enough to do for me—that's all you need trouble over. Now there's only one way I can get the money, the few hundreds I have left of what Nathan advanced I want for present expenses. Sir John has lent me all he can, not another penny can be squeezed from him. There's only Fluffy left, and he, as you know, is starting for Paris early in the morning. I dare not leave it till then, at all costs I must get the cheque to-night."

I looked at her despairingly.

"It isn't possible, Frankie. It's past midnight."

"I know, but Fluffy never turns in till quite late. I would go to him myself but my absence would be commented on. I've made a great hit to-night, Cynthia, and I want to follow it up. It would be a great mistake to leave so early in the evening. Now *your* going won't matter."

"Why, Frankie, you don't mean to send *me* to Fluffy's?" I asked piteously.

She glanced at me, uncertain whether to frighten or cajole. I think my face must have startled her, I felt very white and tired—for with one of her swift changes she grew gentle and caressing.

"I was her dear little Cynthia, if only I would do this one thing for her she would be for ever grateful. If I refused what could she do? She had no one else to turn to," this and much more in the same strain with kisses and endearments.

"I'm not asking you to do anything wrong, Cynthia. It's a little unconventional certainly, but you're not usually so particular. Besides, you can settle with Fluffy about your shares at the same time. The bets oughtn't to go unpaid after to-morrow. If you see Fluffy to-night, the matter will be settled and done with."

At that I felt a little bit relieved. It would be something to lose one's anxiety, at any rate.

"You'll go, Cynthia?"

"I suppose so," I sighed. "Goodness knows where it will all end, Frankie. I feel frightened somehow."

"Nonsense. You're overstrained, that's all. A drive in a hansom will freshen you up. Come, you're not going to be silly? Would you like Ella to go with you?"

"No thank you," I said weakly, drying my eyes, "I'll get through somehow by myself. Have you written what you want to Fluffy?"

"Yes, here's the note. You know his address? Drive to the Temple and tell the cab to wait for you. I've brought your cloak, so you can slip downstairs, send for a hansom and get away without anyone knowing. They're nearly all at supper. Ready? That's right, give me a kiss. Bring me back good news. Mind I *must* have that cheque."

She watched me down the corridor, then flitted away, a brilliant figure in her gorgeous dress.

The staircase and the great hall were comparatively deserted, but a stream of men came out of the smoke-room as I passed by; Lord Chesterton and Percival Hope among them.

His lordship hurried after me.

"I'm tired," I explained, "and want to get away. No, you mustn't come with me on any account, but if you'd tell them to fetch me a hansom I should be grateful."

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He went forward to give the instructions; for a minute Percival stood quite close to me. His face was troubled, as he met my eyes, its expression deepened into regret, almost, I thought, self-reproach. I looked weary and forlorn in my white draperies, and the sight seemed to hurt him.

He followed Chesterton, who put me in the cab. His lordship waved adieu from the top of the steps, Percival remained on the pavement.

I put up the trap and corrected the address that Chesterton had given.

"Not Pont Street," said I sharply, "drive to the Temple."

Percival must have heard what I said, for he gave a start at the words, and made a step forward as though to stop me. If that was his intention he was too late. We had already started. Once or twice during that midnight drive I fancied I was being followed. The jingle of a hansom close behind kept time with us, hastening or slackening speed. It gave me an eerie feeling, but as we approached the Strand and neared my journey's end, the sensation was lost in a whirl of conflicting emotions. Would Fluffy be there, would he send my cousin the cheque? Also would he give me the money for my shares? If not, Frankie declared that she must bid a long farewell to Society and the smart set. And I—I shivered in my cloak. What would become of me?

The cab drew up at the Temple gates, close shut as any prison. Telling the driver to wait, I summoned up my courage and knocked at the grim portals. The porter could not tell me for certain if Mr. Thomson was in, but he thought so.

Fluffy rented his flat from a barrister friend at present in South Africa. They were nice rooms, and suited Fluffy, being near the City, and not so very far from the West End. Frankie and I had lunched with him several times, and I had been there with messages more than once. But then it had been daylight, now the place looked quite different. Strange, lonely, remote, it seemed far from the bright town, far from the present time.

I hastened nervously through the deserted courts, glancing timidly behind me, for I fancied I heard footsteps following; the moon cast fantastic shadows on the flagstones, touching the grey walls of the old buildings with a beautiful, soft light. It was very still, and very strange.

Fluffy's flat was half way up a tall block of buildings. The entry was dark, I stumbled once or twice, and half thought I heard the footsteps hurrying towards me. Fear gave me strength. I flew up the old staircase, nor paused until I found myself at Fluffy's door.

I knocked loudly, startling the echoes of the grim place. I had not long to wait. Quiet, self-possessed, Fluffy himself stood before me.

Now Mr. Thomson was invariably nice to me, but I thought it strange, on this occasion he did not seem at all pleased that I had come. He frowned when I said Frankie had sent me to him, and muttered something about "shameful."

However, he soon regained his good-humour, took me into the sitting-room, and put me into a comfortable chair. He then read Frankie's note, asked one or two incisive questions, and sat down to write.

"You'll send Frankie what she wants?" I said wistfully. "She's afraid this man will ruin her if he doesn't have the money. Don't think me curious, Mr. Thomson, indeed, I don't want to pry into my cousin's affairs, but has she any real cause to fear this person? I was too confused to ask Frankie when she sent me here, but surely her fears are exaggerated?"

"I share your views, Miss Cynthia. Mrs. Norton has nothing really to fear from this Casellis—what could he know to harm her? What, indeed, is there for him or anyone to know? But your cousin is a beautiful woman and attractive to men, about such people are ever ready to talk, not always kindly. In Jamaica, as elsewhere, she excited envy as well as admiration. There may have been some little gossip concerning your cousin and certain of her admirers. This gossip Casellis might retail. As for its effect on people who know your cousin——" He shrugged his shoulders—"Society's a strange thing, full of caprices as a Creole. I have known a bit of gossip ruin a woman's reputation before now."

"Surely it would be better to threaten Casellis than pay him? Don't you think so, Mr. Thomson?"

Fluffy smiled amiably.

"I think we must leave that for Mrs. Norton to decide," he said, and commenced looking through some papers.

For a minute there was silence, the silence of night, deep, profound.

The next and the stillness was broken.

There came a knocking, violent and prolonged, upon the outer door.

Fluffy started to his feet, his face white and distressed. His eyes sought mine, then glanced hurriedly round the room. He was more perturbed than I had ever seen him.

"Too bad," he muttered under his breath, "and such a child!"

Then, for the knocking was continuous, with a last look, protesting and apologetic, he went quickly from the room.

I heard the opening of the door, a voice, quick and angry, hurried footsteps down the hall. The *portière* was roughly flung aside, a figure, a man's figure strode into the room.

With a scream I started to my feet.

Percival Hope stood there before me!

(*Another exciting instalment appears next Tuesday.*)

Hard to Please.

PAPA: "My daughter tells me, sir, that you kissed her forcibly last night. What have you to say for yourself?" Harry: "I'm sure nobody regrets the occurrence more than I do." Papa and Daughter (together): "Sir!"

Some Alteration Necessary.

"HURRY to the door, Mary, and let Mr. Smith in. He has rung twice." "That isn't Mr. Smith, it is the other young gentleman." "Well, wait a minute, then. I must change these photographs on the mantelpiece."

To Create an Impression.

BROTHER CLAUDE: "Waiting to see Ethel?" Young Somerby: "Yes; I sent up my card some time ago." "Well, she isn't in." "Why am I kept waiting, then?" "I heard mamma say she expected the new minister every minute, and you look so well with the rest of the things in the parlour she wanted to keep you."

An Able Partner.

"TOM, I hear that you are engaged to Miss Spider." "Yes." "But do you intend to marry her?" "Why not?" "Is it possible that you have not heard?" "Heard what?" "That she has, at different times, sued five men for breaches of promise?" "Yes, I heard that." "And still you intend to marry her?" "Of course. She won all the suits, and as I am a lawyer I cannot help but admire her skill. She will make me an able partner, old boy, and business is so slow with me that I cannot afford to let such an opportunity slip through my fingers."

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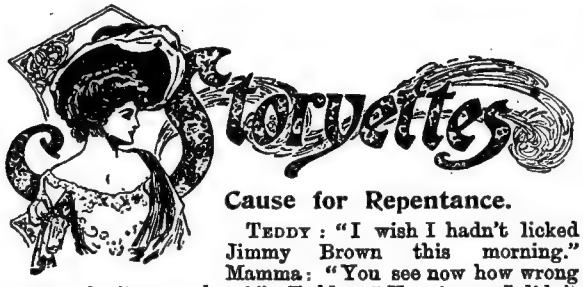

Cause for Repentance.

Teddy: "I wish I hadn't licked Jimmy Brown this morning." Mamma: "You see now how wrong it was, don't you, dear?" Teddy: "Yes, 'cause I didn't know till noon that he was going to give a party."

Not to be Declined.

"A kiss, I'm told," said pretty Susie Brown, "is both a common and a proper noun." "That's true," her lover said, "but you will find it is a noun not easily declined."

Married Bliss.

Mr. Nuwed: "Good gracious, dear, what on earth have you been doing with my meerschaum pipe?" Mrs. Nuwed: "Why, darling, I saw it all stained brown, so I gave it a good scouring with Bristol brick; but it doesn't seem to have done much good."

Practice v. Sentiment.

A sentimental poet writes: "How can I meet my darling?" After some deliberation over the question we have come to the conclusion that he can meet her by approaching her from an opposite direction.

Solving the Problem.

George: "Women are still pushing their way into all the industries." Jack: "That's so. I have just been discharged to make way for a woman." "You have? Well, well! What are you going to do now?" "I am trying to marry the woman."

Heroism.

Sharpe: "I saved a girl's life this morning." Wooden: "Why, how was that?" Sharpe: "Well, I was smoking on the hotel verandah that cigar you gave me, and she said, 'Pardon me, sir, but that cigar is killing me.' So I threw it away and smoked one of my own."

Curiosity.

She: "Women haven't a bit more curiosity than men, I'm certain." He: "No, but it is manifested in different lines. For instance, a woman might own a sewing-machine without finding out how it is made, but she wouldn't have a seamstress in the house a day without knowing all about her."

A Suitable Profession.

"I don't believe in opposing the preferences of a son in the matter of choosing a profession," said an indulgent father. "Nor I," said another father. "Has your son chosen his profession?" "Well, in a way." "What is it?" "Why, he was stage-struck, and insisted that he was 'born for the boards,' as he expressed it; and so I apprenticed him to a carpenter!"

Philanthropic Travellers.

Little Ethel: "Read me some of that pretty story, won't you, mamma?" Mamma: "Very well. Where were we? Oh! here is the place: 'When the half-frozen travellers had reached the shore they climbed up the bank, and, skirting the woods——'" Little Ethel: "What did they do that for, mamma?" Mamma: "Why, it was winter, you know, dear, and the wind blew fiercely, so they——" Little Ethel: "Oh, I know. The limbs of the poor little trees were bare, so the travellers skirted them. Wasn't it nice of the kind travellers?"

Nearly the Same.

Little Girl: "Did you ever dream of being in Heaven?" Little Boy: "No, not 'xactly; but I dreamt that I was right in the middle of a big apple dumpling."

Squeezing Business.

"Seems to me, Maud, that young Mr. Hankinson stayed pretty late last night. Did he have any pressing business?" Maud (blushingly): "Not till just before he went away, mamma."

Love at First Sight.

She: "Here come the bride and bridegroom. Do you suppose it was a case of love at first sight?" He: "Oh, yes. He caught a glimpse of the conterfoil of her father's cheque book."

Has to be Muscular.

She: "Why is it they speak of a man as a 'strong' candidate? He doesn't have to lift anything, does he?" He: "Er—not exactly; but his friends all expect him to carry the day."

Rough on Father.

Perdita: "If you continue much longer to play cards with my father I won't marry you." Jack Dashing: "If your father continues to play cards much longer with me I won't need to marry you."

Unhealthy Kissing.

Mr. Huggins: "What do you think of the latest medical dictum that kissing is unhealthy?" Mr. Hunker: "It is quite true. Mr. Munn happened to catch me kissing his daughter, and I was laid up a whole week."

He Paid for It.

Stranger: "You are the only gentleman in the room." Guest: "In what way, sir?" Stranger: "When I tripped in the dance, and went sprawling on the floor, tearing my fair partner's dress, you were the only one in the room who did not laugh." Guest: "The lady is my wife, and I paid for the dress."

But She Didn't Jump.

"Is it true, Miss Gertie," he said, "that there are just two things a woman will jump at—a conclusion and a mouse?" "No," she answered. "There is a third, Mr. Philip." After thinking the matter over for a few minutes he tremblingly made her an offer, but she didn't jump at it. He was not the right man.

Great Business Ability.

Father: "I hope you are doing well in the financial world, my boy?" Son: "Yes, father; I made three thousand last year, but if I have good luck this year I shall make a cool fifty thousand." "You have great business ability, Jack. It is a legitimate speculation, I suppose?" "Oh, yes; Miss Hendrick is going to answer me to-night."

Misunderstood.

Passenger (angrily): "Why didn't you stop the car for me?" Conductor: "How was I to know you wanted to get on?" Passenger: "Didn't you see me swinging my arms, and jumping up and down and waving my umbrella?" Conductor: "Of course. Could anyone help seeing you? The whole street was looking at you." Passenger: "Then why didn't you stop?" Conductor: "I thought you were dancing to that organ."

A Case for Pity.

She was not young, but she had money. "Dearest," he began, but she stopped him. "I anticipate what you are about to say, Mr. Simkins," she said, "and I would spare your feelings, for it can never be. I esteem you highly, and will be a sister to——" "I have four sisters already," he interrupted bitterly; "four grown-up sisters—and life is a hideous burden. But, oh, Clara," he went on passionately, "if you cannot be my wife, will you not give me a mother's protecting love? I am an orphan."

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LOVE'S SILENT WORK.

A Pretty Little Romance of a City Office.

Miss Lizzie Metcalfe sat in front of the typewriting machine with her hands resting idly in her lap, and with a vacant stare in her usually expressive eyes. Presently her brows curved slightly as the eyes assumed a troubled look and the whole appearance of her face indicated deep and perplexed meditation. Her thoughts ran in this way:

"I shall not be able to endure this for long; I must get another situation. That won't be difficult, but I don't think I can bear *that*, either. Oh, dear, how wretched I feel!"

There was just a suspicion of moisture about the eyes; she closed the lids in order to repress the rising tears, but this had the effect of making the first tears emerge and cling to the lashes. She hastily wiped them away, and glanced round to make sure that no one had entered and seen her.

"Mr. Henry Carter—Harry, I cannot help calling him—has changed much during the past few weeks. I suppose I ought not to have imagined that the managing clerk of a stockbroking firm such as this would ever think of me except as a typist, yet——" She seemed afraid to pursue the thought further, and looked round again. "Yes, he did. He paid marked attention to me, and encouraged me to think that—that he was—in love with me! Why should I not think it? I love him; I can, at least, admit that to myself. There is nothing to be ashamed of, even if he does not return it. Love recognises no controlling power; it comes as it will. But I am certain that he loved me, and now he avoids me as much as he can. What does it mean?"

Then her thoughts took another turn, apparently not more congenial.

"I must get away from here, because Mr. Desmond's attentions are becoming too evident. I can't marry that man, and if the chief of a big firm finds that a typist in his employ doesn't want him, there is no doubt about what will happen. Oh, I wonder why these things happen? And what has made Harry look so careworn lately?"

She was aroused from a deep reverie by the entrance of one of the juniors.

"Hallo, Miss Metcalfe! Haven't you been out to lunch?"

Lizzie coloured slightly as she remembered that she had sat for three-quarters of an hour busy with her thoughts instead of going out to lunch as she should have done.

"I —I didn't feel quite well, thank you!" she stammered. "I don't want any lunch."

"Oh, but you must have some!" expostulated the youth with good-natured concern. "You haven't appeared quite well lately, you know, and——"

"I have some biscuits," interrupted Lizzie hurriedly, not liking the idea that her secret should in part have shown itself in her looks and manner. "Those will be sufficient."

The afternoon was rather a busy one for all in the firm, and Lizzie had little time to think of her own concerns. All the letters had been cleared off, and she was thinking of going when Mr. Desmond called her in to take down another letter.

"You needn't stop for me, Carter," he said. "I'll lock the private door when we leave."

All the clerks had gone, and Carter had no desire to stay. He went to the lavatory to wash before departing, for he was a well-groomed man, leaving his roll top desk open.

Mr. Desmond was a man of fifty, just a little under, perhaps, but not far from the half century. He was a widower, with a daughter about the same age as Miss Metcalfe, as he himself remembered with just a little misgiving. Of course, he admitted, it would be more natural for her to fall in love with a younger man—Carter, for instance, a smart fellow of twenty-eight, who had risen to his present position by his ability. Still, there was no reason why she should have any objection to marrying a man of fifty. He had money, which counted for a good deal in such matters, and there was also a great amount of truth in the hackneyed remark about a young man's slave and an old man's darling. And he wasn't an old man! A woman gets old sooner than a man, so the discrepancy would lessen as the years went on!

Mr. Desmond took a long time to collect his thoughts in order to dictate that letter, and he appeared to have mislaid a paper containing information necessary for the purpose. They heard Carter return to his room, and they heard him depart.

"He didn't shut his desk," thought Lizzie. "I didn't hear the rattle and the bang. I must shut it when I have done. What a time this tiresome man is! Can he be doing this on purpose?"

She had guessed correctly.

"Miss Metcalfe," said Desmond suddenly. "I have no letter to dictate; I want to say something. I'll go straight to the point. I want you to marry me!"

He gazed at her anxiously, waiting for some reply. She turned pale, her very lips seemed white. She tried to speak, but no words came.

"I am afraid that I have upset you," said Desmond with some compunction. "It *was* rather sudden, I suppose, but surely you have guessed something from my manner lately? My daughter, I am sure, will be delighted!"

He was not at all sure of that, despite his words; he had made that remark for want of something better to say. He was confused.

"I really don't know what to say," gasped Lizzie at length. It was perfectly true; she felt that she could not accept, but she wished to say so in a manner that would not utterly offend him, and that was beyond her strength at that moment. "I think that you might do—that is, I don't think—— Oh, Mr. Desmond, let me go now and I will tell you to-morrow!" she concluded in desperation.

"Certainly!" responded Desmond with alacrity. He was feeling uncomfortable.

Lizzie almost rushed from the place and hurried home to her lodging. Her first idea was to write a refusal, and not go to the offices of Desmond and Co. again, but on reflection she gave up the notion and resolved to wait till the morrow and make the refusal as gently as possible. The decision to wait was in itself trivial, but it changed the whole course of events.

Lizzie's sleep was troubled; she dreamt in several ways that Harry was in distress, and that did not strike her as strange because she knew how preoccupied and thoughtful—almost neglectful—he had been. Her first thought on awaking was that she had not shut his desk; she took this upon herself as an act of negligence, for which he would blame her; she ought to have done it over night before leaving the office.

"It isn't my business!" she muttered at the breakfast table. Nor was it, yet she felt in an indefinable manner that she ought to have done it. "Perhaps I think so because I love him!" she admitted. And she forthwith resolved to get to the office before anyone else and shut it.

The caretaker handed her the key when she reached the large building in which the suite of offices was located. She entered the outer office and passed swiftly to Carter's small private room. The desk was open, and a curious clerk or office boy could have amused himself with the perusal of papers regarded as private by the firm, and possibly of Carter's personal papers and letters.

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As she approached the desk she noticed two letters lying on it, stamped ready for posting. Understanding that the managing clerk had forgotten these in his preoccupation, she took them up and casually glanced at the addresses, and her face paled. One was addressed to "Miss A. Desmond" and the other to a man to whom Carter often wrote. Then she noticed another thing; the writer had exchanged the addresses, sending Miss Desmond's letter to the male correspondent and *vice-versâ*.

"He is writing to *her!* Then he is in love with her, and she returns his affection!" murmured Lizzie hopelessly, a sharp pain at her heart. "I must send these letters on, but I must alter the addresses. Shall I type fresh envelopes and inclose these as they are?" She was almost too agitated to know what to do for the best, but she finally decided to take the addressed envelope off the letters and place them in fresh ones, addressed on the typewriter.

"No one will then know that he made a mistake, and he will not be laughed at!"

She addressed the envelopes first, then opened the letters; and then, perhaps it was only human nature, she read a line of the letter.

It certainly was not one of a series of love letters; it was like an apology for writing. She forgot the usual rules of upright conduct and read on.

It was a humble proclamation of affection; the writer dared to lay his suit before her in the hope that she would not find it unacceptable, that she would favour him with a reply and an appointment, or allow him to approach her father on the subject.

What did it mean? Lizzie stamped the letter as an effort, not a spontaneous effusion. That was not like Harry; moreover, Miss Desmond was scarcely the kind of girl to attract him, she reflected, although she had thought differently at first when reading the superscription on the envelope.

She was standing at his desk now, and she looked upon it as if in search of a clue. She found it in the form of a crumpled piece of paper just inside a pigeon-hole.

She felt no scruples now; she did not stop to feel or think anything. She smoothed out the paper and deciphered a few of the shorthand notes hastily written thereon. Only a small portion of the writing was legible to her, but that was enough. She took the other letter and read it; afterwards she placed the two letters in the new envelopes and hastened to post them. The air was cool and it soothed her.

"Good Heavens! I see it all now!" she gasped, her breath coming in short, quick pants. "I see now why he has been so worried, and I understand one or two remarks I have heard, weeks ago. Harry has been speculating with the firm's money; he was fortunate for a time, so he could 'cut a dash,' as they say; but he has lost and must get two thousand pounds in a few days, or——"

She shuddered; it was too terrible to think of.

"He is in debt now all round, and a loan is impossible. He will be found out in a few days, so he is trying to win the affections of Desmond's daughter as a last resource. If he succeeds, he will save himself, for Desmond cannot prosecute his daughter's affianced husband. He will be unhappy with her, and it is not fair to himself, to her, or—anyone else!"

She was back in the office again. Harry was making a desperate move, but it was very doubtful whether he would succeed, as the time was so short that the plot could not be far enough advanced for him to shelter himself behind the engagement. Could she, Lizzie, do anything to save him?

"I cannot believe that he is really wicked, he has been led away and this would be a terrible warning to him. I am sorry that he has come in contact with Groser, he is not a good man. Is there any way? Yes! It is hateful of me, but love is self-sacrificing, and I will do it—for him!"

Mr. Desmond shot a meaning glance at her as he passed through the office, her heart beat high, and she half arose to follow him, but sank back again. She must not be too precipitate. The managing clerk passed to his room, and it was evident that he knew nothing of his forgetfulness of the previous evening.

At last, Lizzie's agitation would allow her to remain inactive no longer, she rose from her chair with an air of stern determination and went straight to Desmond's room.

Mr. Desmond watched her expectantly as she carefully closed the door behind her. Lizzie approached him with an expression of determination which Desmond tried to interpret as an indication of pleasure, but with indifferent success.

"I have come to give you my answer, Mr. Desmond," said Lizzie with an effort. Her mouth was dry, and she had some difficulty in uttering the words. "I will consent to—to marry you—on one condition."

"Any condition you like!" exclaimed Desmond jumping up and taking her hand. "I hardly expected—and yet, I thought—I mean, I'm as happy as can be!" And Desmond certainly appeared beside himself with delight. "There is nothing I wouldn't do for you, Miss Metcalfe! Let me see, what is your Christian name? You must call me by mine, you know, and you must give up this work, and——"

It is impossible to tell how long he would have rattled on if Lizzie, who felt herself shrink from him, had not stopped him.

"You may not agree to the condition, after all, Mr. Desmond," she interrupted, trying hard not to betray her agitation. "It is this—That you give me two thousand pounds in Bank of England notes to-morrow!"

Desmond stared; he did not consider the condition a very onerous one, for he had made much money, but he was startled at the strangeness of it. What could a girl like Miss Metcalfe want with that sum, cash down at once?

"Ah, you do not agree!" cried Lizzie, showing distress in spite of herself. "But I must have the money or I will not consent. To-morrow or the next day?"

"Oh, I agree!" exclaimed Desmond hastily. He was not going to lose her. "But, you see, it's a strange condition. I can give you the money now, if necessary, but—h'm!—it is strange that a young woman should require so much immediately. You could have all you wanted when we are married, you see! Yes, yes, perhaps some relative is in trouble, eh?"

Desmond did not feel quite easy; it was mysterious, and he wished to get to the bottom of that mystery. He was an honourable man, very strict in his dealings, and with a horror of everything that appeared shady. The kind of man who would be generous to those who did right and very severe, almost merciless, to those who went astray.

"Exactly!" responded Lizzie laconically. She dared not trust herself to say much.

"Well, I can help them in other ways, perhaps," continued Desmond. "It is not always wise to do as you propose; it is sometimes better to help a little, and so stimulate individual effort towards getting out of trouble."

"Not in this case. The money is wanted at once," said Lizzie decisively.

"Then you shall have it to-morrow!" declared Desmond. He felt a pang of disappointment that the girl was not giving herself to him freely, but there is a thorn with most roses, and he persuaded himself that it was all right, and that they would be very happy together.

"Thank you!" said Lizzie simply.

She was about to turn towards the door when he caught her and lifted her face—such a white face!—to his, at the same time stooping to kiss her. The handle of the door moved, and Desmond hastily released her as Carter entered. He was too busy with the subject in his mind to notice anything; he concluded that Lizzie had been taking down letters, and held the door open for her to pass out.

An office-boy, who entered Desmond's office an hour later, was stricken with temporary speechlessness at seeing that gentleman waltzing about the room. Desmond hurried out to lunch after that, and when he returned he placed an envelope in front of Lizzie.

"I have fulfilled the condition without waiting for to-morrow," he whispered, and I expect you to come and thank me!"

He passed through the office to his room. The clerks were at lunch. Lizzie trembled as she recognised that the notes

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were there. She forgot about going to thank Mr. Desmond; she hastily typed a few words on a plain slip of ordinary note-paper which she had in her drawer, placed it in the envelope, then sealed the latter and laid it on Carter's desk. The words contained on that slip were: "From a friend. To help you out of trouble and disgrace."

Lizzie watched the door till Carter entered, and then hurried away to have her own lunch. She ate nothing, she could not eat, and she wandered aimlessly about the City streets till she suddenly remembered that she had been absent longer than the prescribed limit of time, when she returned to the office as quickly as she could.

"I say, Miss Metcalfe, the governor is waiting for you!" cried the office boy. "There's something wrong. Miss Desmond came just now and—There, that's his bell again!"

Miss Desmond had found out that her father wanted to marry his typewriter girl and objected, so thought Lizzie as she took off her hat and jacket and answered the call. She was in a dazed condition.

"Miss Metcalfe," said Desmond, holding out a letter, "has the money required by you any connection with this?"

Lizzie took the letter, and her heart sank as she recognised the letter written by Carter to his friend and accomplice. It was useless to make any denial, the letter stated the sum required, and detailed circumstances that revealed the misdeeds of Carter, and the blow had come so suddenly that Lizzie's countenance betrayed her. But how did that letter get into her employer's hands, and what had Miss Desmond to do with it? Then the idea flashed across her mind; she had, in her agitated condition, placed the letters in the wrong envelope and sent the incriminating epistle to Miss Desmond. In trying to save the man she loved, she had brought a disaster upon him!

"I know that the envelope was typed by Miss Metcalfe," observed Miss Desmond coldly. "She has a set way of typing envelopes. She knows all about this wrong use of your money!"

Lizzie Metcalfe sank into a chair and sobbed bitterly for a while, but Desmond spoke kindly to her, after bidding his daughter remain silent, and soon had the whole story out of her, so far as she knew it. It was not pleasant to learn that the girl had tried to sacrifice herself in order to save the man she loved; yet, on the other hand, it made him regret that he could not possess a woman who was ready to do so much. He stifled a sigh that such love could not be given to him, and asked the still weeping girl to go straight home at once.

"But you won't punish him, will you?" pleaded Lizzie. "I am sure he is not really wicked; it was a temptation."

"I will do my best," said Desmond, as he conducted her to the door. "For your sake!" he added, in a low, wistful tone.

Miss Desmond departed a little later, and Desmond rang for Carter.

"Carter," said his chief gravely, "this letter was sent to the wrong person. It will not be necessary for you to secure the hand of my daughter as stated therein, in order to raise the money, or get out of the scrape. The money has been obtained for you by some one in the office. You can guess who that is! Although there is no need for flight, it will be well for you to go away to some other country where you can begin again and work honestly. I will forgive the discrepancy which I shall detect in your books, and I will also give you the notes laid on your desk. They were mine, but you owe them to a girl who was ready to sacrifice herself to save you, and would have done so but for an accident. I do not suppose that you will ever possess her now, but you can at least try to be worthy of her!"

The last words have never ceased to ring in the ears of Carter, and they have furnished him with a motto and an incentive in the colony where he has settled. It is six years ago, but he knows through a friend that Lizzie Metcalfe is still single, and hope is gradually rising in his breast that he may one day venture to write to her and ask her if she will join him in the far-off land, and that she will consent.

Geo. Day.

Your Editor Chats.

As I promised last week, I am now going to give you a few hints as to the best method of putting your ideas for a story into readable form.

To begin with, the most successful stories are those which don't deal with "trick" ideas, but with the human emotions. By "trick" idea stories, I mean stories the plots of which turn on some sort of improbable invention—a walking stick or brooch which squirts out poison at an appropriate moment, or a mysterious handle to a front door which seems to have a human face in it, or nonsense of that sort. Avoid, if possible, incidents in which there is anything of the "knock-about" business, where one man fights a dozen and beats them, or where the gentle heroine gets dragged round the room by the villain, by the hair of her head. Select some striking situation and then sit down for an hour and think it carefully over, introducing as few characters as possible, and playing as much as you can upon the emotions of your characters. An excellent example of this style of writing is to be found in the serial story now running through these pages.

Having got your ideas roughly put together in your head, the next process is to commit them to paper. In doing this don't strain after fine writing; the best stories are always those which are written in the simplest language. Avoid a lengthy description of people or places at the opening of the story. To do this simply tires the reader from the outset. You want, so to speak, to jump in with both feet and grip the attention of the reader from the first line.

Now that you know what to do, see if you can write a short story. You can make it as short as you like, so long as it is not less than a thousand words. Then send it to me in an envelope marked "ATTEMPT," to the offices of SHORT STORIES, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and I will give a guinea to the writer of what I consider to be the best. All stories should reach me before August 22nd.

Result of the "Sentence" Competition.

THE prize of a barbaric guard goes to M. M. Payne, 3 Chicheley Street, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, for the following sentence composed entirely of words of four letters each, relative to our F. A. F.:—"From what vile slum come they—this vast host, this huge army? What real hope have they? They need food, they need play; give them what they need, feed them well. Take them away from this life that they live; away from this foul city, just this once. Make them feel real, true life. Help this good fund then; send your mite; open your hand, then your mind will find rest." Consolation gifts go to the following:—H. Barnes, 2 Vauxhall Walk, S.E.; J. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham, E.; D. G. Jelley, 85 Ermine Road, Ladywell; W. Hambridge, 20 Milton Street, Banbury, Oxon; B. R. Dixon, Magherafelt, Co. Derry, Ireland; E. Payne, 3 Chicheley Street, Newport Pagnell; J. A. Downie, 231 Gt. Junction Street, Leith; Mrs. Carpenter, 4 Greencroft Gardens, South Hampstead, N.W.; R. Gray, 14 Algernon Terrace, Tynemouth, North Shields; T. Allison, 18 Fleet Street, Gorton, Manchester.

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OUR THRILLING SERIAL.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

The Thread of the Story.

A BELT full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude.

Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, determines to prove the latter's guilt.

Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!" But Revelle, by sheer force of will, compels her to acknowledge her mistake.

At about this time Esther and Mr. Crump are walking together when they observe Vance about to throw herself into the reservoir. Crump stops her just in time—he and Esther taking her back to The Woodlands. Later on she is placed in the county asylum.

The great balloon incident now approaches. There is to be a grand *fête* in Lord Normanhurst's grounds, the chief and closing event being a balloon ascent by Mr. Seaton Revelle. Everything goes well till two horsemen arrive with the news that Vance has escaped from the asylum.

Acting upon Crump's advice they go straight to the reservoir, but fail to find the missing girl. The search is given up at nightfall. Shortly before nightfall Revelle makes his ascent. A storm, however, compels him to come down, the anchor touching ground on a neighbouring common just where Vance is waiting for him. The girl clings on to the anchor, and Revelle, quickly making a terrible resolve, throws out a number of sandbags, and the balloon again rises and continues its flight till Warham reservoir is reached. Just as the balloon is passing over the water Revelle cuts the anchor rope.

Vance's dead body is found next morning, Mr. Crump being informed of the discovery while walking with Esther.

Mr. Crump examines the body and finds that a leg is broken, evidently by a fall. The coroner's jury return a verdict of "Found drowned." Mr. Crump next takes a walk on the common, and discovers some sand-bags.

Mr. Mansfield thinks it best that Esther shall leave Warham for a little holiday. It is while changing at Roxeter Junction *en route* for Gurlston Bay that Fate brings about a meeting between Esther and Alec, who is on his way to Wrackam. An impassioned scene takes place on the platform. Before many days are passed Seaton Revelle also journeys to Gurlston Bay, and it is while there that they hear of the plucky rescue from drowning of a warder at Wrackam Prison by Alec Scarsdale, and, subsequently of his rumoured escape from prison.

The rumour proves to be true. Alec had indeed managed to escape from the prison, and taking a boat had pulled down the river, after purloining some sailors' clothes from an empty barge. Just when he is thoroughly exhausted, however, he is run down by a sailing barge. His boat is smashed, but Alec is rescued and taken on board. The barge proves to be the *Mary Ann*, bound for Gurlston Bay. Arrived at its destination, it is hardly moored to the pier before Esther, who is taking a walk, arrives at the pier to watch the unloading.

Shortly afterwards Revelle saunters up, when suddenly Esther catches sight of Alec in the barge. With great presence of mind she leads Revelle away from the spot before he discovers whom she has seen. Late that night, after everyone has gone to bed, Esther contrives a meeting with Alec in the drawing-room of the house in which she is staying. The two lovers are clasped in each other's arms when a man's footsteps are suddenly heard outside the door.

A CHASE IN THE DARKNESS.

"IF you love me, go!"

Alec Scarsdale pressed a burning kiss upon Esther's lips; broke away from her; darted across the room. The moonlight was playing on the lawn beyond. As his figure became framed in the window, the door was flung back. Seaton Revelle darted in, and sighted the figure, on the lawn now. As he reached the window it plunged into the shrubbery. The room itself was in darkness. He had glanced neither to right nor left, had not seen Esther crouching down so close to him that with an outstretched hand he might almost have touched her. His every thought had been centred on the man. It had all happened in far less time than it takes to describe. Only as he passed out into the moonlight did Esther realise that the man in pursuit of her lover was Revelle! Terror and surprise had momentarily robbed her of the power to think, to plan. Still crouching in the darkness, her hands locked together in a grip of agony, she saw him plunge into the shrubbery. Had he recognised the man whom he was pursuing? Oh, Heaven! What was happening out of sight? Her brain had recovered from the shock. Thoughts were scurrying through her mind with lightning speed. It might be that Revelle had not recognised Alec; that Alec might baffle pursuit! But if she were found there, her presence might give a clue to the identity of the unknown man. If she could only gain her room unnoticed? Her thoughts were not selfish—to screen herself and her reputation from scandal—but to shield the man she loved!

Swiftly, silently, she glided towards the door. She reached the threshold; then stopped dead. Someone was moving towards her from the hall.

Before she could retreat back into the room, there was a rasping sound. A match had been struck. A flickering light broke the darkness. A moment later one of her wrists

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was gripped, only to be released with a startled, incredulous cry, "Great Scott! Miss Mansfield—you!"

Having gathered himself up after his tumble, Gerald Phipps, the young Oxford undergrad., finding himself deserted by Revelle, had altogether lost his bearings, and, after groping his way forward for a few steps, had struck a match, to find himself face to face with a woman. The first thought that flashed through his mind was that she was one of the servants, an accomplice of the man whom he had seen on the lawn. Then the light had played on her features—Esther Mansfield!

The match fell from his hand. He trampled it under foot. Was it possible. Great Scott! Here was a pretty kettleful of fish! Esther Mansfield, the banker's charming, refined daughter, admitting a man into the house in the small hours of the morning. Revelle must have missed her in the dark. Phipps stood for a moment speechless, aghast at the situation. He was a happy-go-lucky young fellow, with rather rapid tendencies, but chivalrous to a degree. One of his tenets was—"Never give a woman away!"

"Look here!" he whispered quickly, "has anyone seen you?"

Esther had seen his face by the light of the match.

"No!" she breathed out.

"Then, for Heaven's sake, get back to your room. I—I won't give you away. Be quick! We shall be having the whole place awake in a minute, and down here!"

He had told himself that it was not a question of a burglary, but of an intrigue. He wished to save her reputation. Esther realised this; but she was willing to accept the slur on her character.

"You won't tell a living soul?" she whispered.

"No!" There was a distant, cold note in the hurriedly breathed out answer. "But go!"

The sound of a sharp in-drawing of breath, the faint rustle of a dress, told him that she had gone. He waited for a few seconds; then, striking another match, was about to enter the drawing-room, when voices reached him. They were followed by the appearance at the top of the stairs of two airily-dressed figures carrying candles. The next moment Phipps was conscious that some sort of fire-arm was being pointed at him, and a shaky voice, that he recognised as the butler's, cried out:

"Hands up, you ruffian, or I fire!"

"Coleman, don't do anything of the sort!"

"Gracious me! Mr. Phipps!"

Unseen, Esther had reached her room. It was in darkness. Quivering from head to foot, her anguish-wrung heart throbbing fiercely, she sought the window and peered out. Her own plight, her compromised reputation, were nothing to her! The episode of a few moments before was only remembered because the man had promised silence. And if Alec had not been recognised and had made good his escape, that silence would be invaluable. Let Gerald Phipps think the worst of her, it mattered not, so long as he held his peace! But what was happening? Lights were moving to and fro on the lawn now. Most of the household had been awakened. The suspense was almost unbearable. The window was open. Esther strained every nerve to catch what was being said. She recognised her host's voice; then Gerald Phipps spoke. She heard him explain how, leaving his bed to open the window wider, he had caught sight of a man in the act of crossing the lawn; how he had awakened Revelle; how he had tumbled at the foot of the stairs. Not a word about herself!

"Could you distinguish the man?" Esther heard Mr. Walters ask.

Her heart ceased to beat.

"No. I could see that he was a man, and that's about all. Revelle must have gone off after him!"

The house itself was being subjected to a rigorous search. Nothing was missing; but presently the butler approached his master with the rather sensational information that there were no signs of the drawing-room having been broken into. The man must have had an accomplice who had admitted him from the inside. The butler was quite certain that the window was securely fastened when he made his final round.

Phipps and some of the others were meditating starting in search of Revelle, when a figure limped on to the lawn.

"Hullo! Here's Revelle!"

Esther's heart leapt into her mouth. He was promptly surrounded by eager questioners.

"A confounded nuisance!" he ejaculated with considerable annoyance; "I managed to catch my foot in a branch or something. I had to give up the chase. My ankle is sprained!"

"Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I'm afraid not. Only saw his back. Couldn't distinguish much; but there was something about the fellow's cut that suggested a sea-faring man!"

"Oh, God be thanked!" whispered Esther, as she locked her fingers together.

Alec had not been recognised. He had made good his escape!

These were her first thoughts; then—what of the future? Their moments together had been cruelly brief. There had been no time to shape plans. Esther had not even learnt how he had contrived to reach Gurlston Bay.

"The future!" she whispered, "it is in God's hands!"

A servant was hurrying away to the police-station. Speculation was rife in the smoking-room whither the gentlemen had retired. The ladies, all but Esther, had gathered together in one room. Miss Bullivant, staying in the house, repeatedly stated that she felt inclined to shriek, and then, being satisfied that her toilette, if somewhat unconventional, was decidedly "fetching," announced her intention of joining the gentlemen in the smoking-room. She did so want to know what had exactly happened, and, also, she would feel safer—"somehow, don't you know!"—with a lot of men around her. On reaching the smoking-room, she made a bee-line to where Revelle was sitting on a couch, his injured foot propped up. She had gathered a rough outline of what had happened.

"How frightfully brave of you!" she murmured. "I'm so sorry to think that you never caught the wretch. And your poor ankle? I'm *so* sorry! Does it hurt you very much?"

She sat down close beside him, and glanced round with a little laugh.

"I hope that I shan't shock anybody; but if anyone could spare me a cigarette—thanks awfully!"

Gerald Phipps had obliged. His boyish face wore a puzzled, rather pained expression. If it had been Miss Bullivant whom he had encountered so unexpectedly in the drawing-room he would not have been so utterly taken by surprise; but Esther Mansfield! Had anyone told him such a thing he would have flatly refused to believe it. But there was no gainsaying the evidence of his own eyes. He was feeling altogether uncomfortable. He had not seen much of Esther; but her charm of manner, her unaffected grace, had made an impression on him.

Perhaps on the morrow she would vouchsafe some explanation. Anyhow, rightly or wrongly, he had no intention of giving her away. But who, in the dickens's name, could the fellow have been? Great Scott!—the idea suddenly flashed across his mind as he held a light to Miss Bullivant's cigarette—could it have been that convict fellow to whom she had been engaged? The idea was not arrived at by any process of reasoning. He could not have explained why it had occurred to him, unless the talk that there had been among the men about Scarsdale had unconsciously affected the current of his thoughts. In fact, it seemed to be flying in the teeth of reason. Wrackam prison was a far cry from Gurlston Bay. According to the evening paper, it looked very much as if Scarsdale had come to an untimely end, though, as yet, there was no proof positive. But once an idea springs into existence, though based upon no solid foundation, it is not always easily eradicated; and Phipps found himself continually thinking of that convict fellow, for whom, both on account of his act of heroism in saving a warder's life and his daring escape—"so awfully

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OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

Our Powerful Serial.

sporting of him, don't you know!"—he had already conceived a great admiration.

Further speculation was put an end to by the arrival of the police. After a careful examination and much questioning, they came to the conclusion that there must have been an accomplice in the house; but whether burglary had been intended, or it had been a clandestine lovers' meeting, it was impossible at the moment to decide. The servants would have to be submitted to a close examination.

* * * * * * *

"If you love me, go!"

The words had spurred Scarsdale into flight. Capture meant prison again, and hopelessness. Freedom, if he could but keep it, meant opportunity to seek for proof of his innocence, perhaps to see Esther again! He heard the crash as his unknown pursuer plunged into the shrubbery after him. Then a low cry and a thud. He must have fallen. The hunted man quickened, gained the road, and went speeding on blindly. The neighbourhood was strange to him.

The road inclined steeply upward. The wound, furrowed across his back by the warder's bullet, had not yet healed. He had not yet recovered from the terrible strain of his escape; but he panted on and up desperately. Once he paused for a second to listen. No sounds broke the stillness. His plight was desperate; but not so desperate as it had been when, wounded and wearing a felon's dress, he had taken that leap into the fog-veiled river. And he had seen her, held her in his arms, heard again from her own lips of her undying love. The words had been as a draught of red wine to him! He had, indeed, much to be thankful for. But for the humane heart of the captain of the *Mary Ann*, he might have been back again at Wrackam prison by now. The nature of Scarsdale's wound had awakened the man's suspicions; he had started to question him closely, and Scarsdale, seeing more danger in evasive answers, had made a clean breast of it. It had proved the right course. "Look here!" skipper Barlow had said, "I'm a married man with a big family, and for their sakes I can't afford to run any risks. Same time, don't you be afraid that I'm going to give you away, because I ain't. If you hadn't told me, I shouldn't have known; but when we make for Gurlston Bay, I reckon we'd best part company!" And this had happened. After dark, Scarsdale had left the *Mary Ann*. At the last moment the skipper had forced a packet upon him containing bread and meat. He had taken the first road leading out of the village. He had shaped no definite plans when Esther's voice reached him.

When he paused again he was on the summit of a cliff. The dull roar of breaking waves reached him. The road turned away inland; but a foot-path, marked at intervals by white stones, ran parallel with the edge of the cliff, and at the point where it branched off from the road stood a sign-post. The words on it were legible in the moonlight: "To the Caves and Black Crag Lighthouse." The skipper had told him of the famous Gurlston caves. He was well-nigh spent, and wanted rest and time to think. He turned from the road and hurried along the footpath. Quarter of a mile further along the path divided, the upward track, according to the sign-post, leading to the lighthouse, the downward one to the caves. He took the downward track. A steep descent of some hundred yards, then a black, tunnel-like mouth, hewn in the rock that barred the way, confronted him. He was without matches. Entering the tunnel, he felt his way along the side. The descent was winding and very steep. Melancholy sounds, the distorted echoes of wind and wave, gave additional uncanniness to the darkness. At last he saw below him a light so faint that it was but visible darkness. The opening led out on to a ledge of rock, strewn with great boulders that had fallen from the cliff above. Now and again the spray of a breaker splashed over. Scarsdale turned. The rock wall behind him was perforated with as many holes as a rabbit-warren, entrances to the network of caves and passages that honey-combed the rock that towered up, sheer and precipitous, above. He stepped to the brink of the ledge. More rocks, cruel-looking, protruding like sharp, black teeth, from the white swirl of the water below. Away in the distance the reflection of the lighthouse beacon shimmered on the rustling waves. The spell of night added to the weird romance of the rugged spot. Scarsdale leant upon a boulder and stared out into the night, thoughts of joy and agony coursing through his soul. He thanked God for those few moments with Esther; yet it was agony to try to picture what had happened after his flight. Had his pursuer passed her unnoticed in the dark? Had she gained her room unseen? Or had she been discovered? He knew that she would rather die than betray him. He imagined her screening him at the cost of her reputation. Remorse stabbed him like a knife. He would have brought it upon her!

He was dead beat. He could go no further that night. Mechanically he drew from his pocket the packet that the skipper had thrust there, and opened it. Besides bread and meat it contained a screw of tobacco, a pipe, and a box of matches. Scarsdale felt a lump rise up into his throat, touched by the thoughtful act of kindness. Then something that he had not noticed fell to the rock with a metallic jingle, and lay glittering in the moonlight—a five shilling-piece!

Perhaps—he prayed God that it might be—he would be able to make good these acts of kindness one day! He picked up the coin, and made his way to one of the cavernous openings. Within, he struck a match. The light revealed a large cave, its low roof seamed with cracks, and here and there dark mouths that looked as if they must lead into the very bowels of the earth.

Surely a man might remain concealed here for days!

A wild thought surged to his brain. Would it be possible to communicate in some way with Esther, let her know of his whereabouts? The idea had quickened the beat of his heart. But how? He sat down in the darkness, filled and lighted his pipe. Would it be possible? Thought followed hard upon thought, but the question was still unanswered when his head began to droop forward and nod, and a desire for sleep mastered all else. Scarcely able to keep his eyes open, he struck a match. The inevitable picnicker had left traces behind him in the shape of litter and paper-bags. He twisted up a fragment of paper and lighted it. He was inured to a hard bed. Behind a fallen fragment of rock where the dust and sand of years had accumulated, he laid himself down. A few moments later he was in a dead sleep!

LOOK OUT FOR THE SPLENDID COLOURED COVER OF NEXT TUESDAY'S "SHORT STORIES."

MR. CRUMP COMMITS A BURGLARY.

It was rather a remarkable fact that so long as Miss Mansfield was at home, Mr. Penworthy had daily superintended the horticultural operations that were being carried on at the Woodlands; but, after Mr. Mansfield's and Esther's departure for Gurlston Bay, he had been content to leave matters largely in the hands of Banks, the gardener. He had, as he ex-

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plained to Mrs. Cobb, a number of jobs that required attending to. He had retained his rooms at Woodbine Cottage, though he had slept but one night there since Mr. Revelle and Mr. Faversham had left the Firs—much to the distress of Pollie, who missed the presence of the kindly little man more than words could have expressed. As a matter of fact, Crump had been assiduously shadowing Mr. Faversham, otherwise Benny, though parallel with this, he had not been neglecting the grim mystery that enshrouded Vance's death. A certain pencilled map that he carried about with him, and which he frequently scrutinised, bore a third cross that denoted where he had found the third bag of ballast, and a line had been drawn through the three crosses, the arrow-head at the end pointing to the words "Warham Reservoir." Crump was devoting most of his attention to Benny at present, in the hope of obtaining a clue as to the disposal of the stolen diamonds and notes. Having learnt that Revelle had gone to Gurlston Bay, and realising his motive, his movements were, for the time being, of less importance, and he could rely on Esther to keep him well informed. Tom Jackson and Fred, in the same way, accounted for the silent Railton between them. But Benny's life in London was altogether above-board. He had not spent his share of the robbery so lavishly as Revelle. Freed from the strain of mixing with upper circles, he was indulging in a mild career of dissipation—billiards, music-halls, theatres; but there was no display of impatience on Crump's part. He was a veritable Job. Once during his official career he had shadowed a man for some years—but he had "bottled him up" at the finish.

"Grandmother, grandmother!" cried Pollie, from the garden-gate of Woodbine Cottage. "Here's Mr. Penworthy!"

Then she darted out towards the homely little figure that had just surmounted the crest of the hill. There was a look of distress on Crump's kindly face; but it brightened with pleasure at the sight of Pollie. As she rushed upon him with open arms, he picked her up, kissed her affectionately, and then, having mounted her on his shoulder, ambled to the cottage, singing of how Pollie and he were sweethearts, many a year ago.

"Oh, I hope you're going to stop for long!" cried Pollie, as she slid down to the ground.

"Not for long, Pollie, I'm afraid. I must be off again to-morrow. Ah, Mrs. Cobb, I am very glad to see you again! And I hope the rheumatism hasn't been troubling you; but I haven't forgotten!"

He produced a bottle from his pocket.

"It isn't a patent medicine, Mrs. Cobb. It is made up from a doctor's prescription. I got it from my friend. I hope you won't need to use it; but if you should I hope that it will do you good!"

It was characteristic of the little man. He had been doing the work of three men; but he had not forgotten the old lady's rheumatism, and a promise made to obtain a prescription from a friend of his similarly afflicted.

Children are children, and Pollie was eyeing, at the same time pretending not to do so, one of the little man's pockets that bulged in a most promising way. Crump's own eyes were twinkling.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, patting the pocket in question. "Why, what on earth's this in my pocket?"

He produced a package.

"But this is some mistake. No—how remarkable! It's addressed to 'Miss Mary Cobb, Woodbine Cottage, Warham.' Well I never! And to think that someone slipped this into my pocket without my noticing it. Dear me! Well, it's evidently meant for you, Pollie, so you had better open it and see what it contains!"

It contained one of those miniature tea-services beloved of little girls.

"O-o-oh!" cried Pollie, scampering with delight, "and we'll have tea out of it next time we go on the common!"

"We will, Pollie!"

And Crump's brightened rather curiously, perhaps from the remembrance of certain discoveries made after his last tea there.

A Woman's Feat.

For a woman to walk eight miles with ease within a short time of being so weak from anæmia and indigestion that she could not walk across her house floor, may be regarded as a pedestrian feat of more than ordinary interest. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans enabled Mrs. Gertrude Morley, of Awsworth, near Ilkeston, to do this. She says: "I was so weak from anæmia, indigestion, and other allied ailments from which I had suffered from girlhood, that I could not walk across the floor without being fagged. Constipation and headache also troubled me sorely. For months I had been in this condition and had vainly tried all sorts of medicine. My husband then bought me a box of Bile Beans, and by the time I had taken them I was a great deal better. A little perseverance with them was all that was necessary to restore me to health. I am now well and recently walked eight miles with ease."

The above is by no means an isolated case of the vast benefit resulting from Bile Beans. They are the world's specific for anæmia, indigestion, constipation, piles, headache, all female ailments, liver and kidney disorders, warm weather languor, and all diseases arising out of loss of energy, defective liver action and assimilation. Supplied by all chemists at one and three-halfpence or two and nine per box. They are sold only in sealed boxes: refuse all offered loose.

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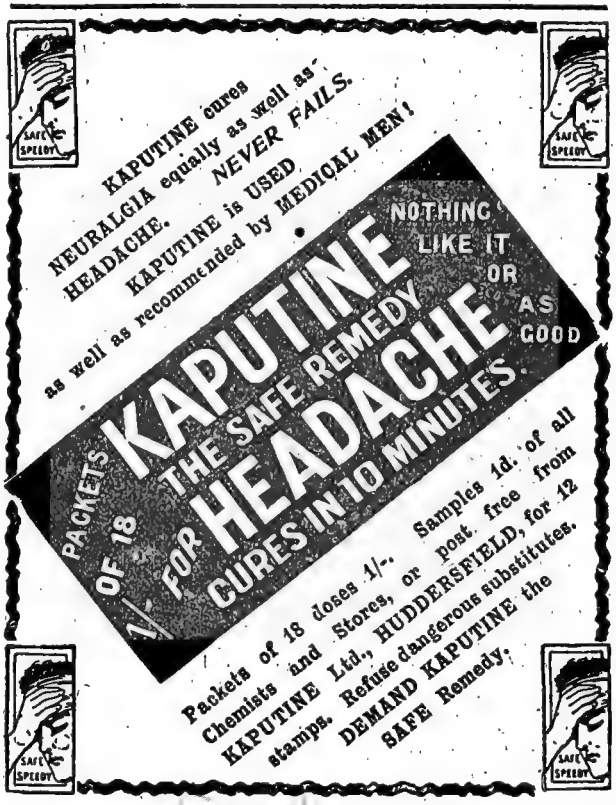
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"And now, Mrs. Cobb, my young friends, Tom Jackson and Fred Wilton are off duty this afternoon, and are coming to see me. Can you manage tea for us, without putting yourself out?"

Then, having been hugged most vigorously by Pollie for the beautiful tea-things, he went into his sitting-room. The sad look returned to his face. He had read of Alec Scarsdale's escape in the morning paper. In the evening paper, he had read of the finding of the battered-in boat.

"It doesn't follow," he whispered brokenly; but—poor girl, poor girl!"

He drew his hand across his eyes, then, seating himself, started to write a letter to Esther. It was a simple, brief, but noble letter. He had finished, and was writing the address on the envelope, when Tom Jackson and Fred—both in mufti—entered. They, too, had seen the evening paper. The little man shook their hands silently. For a while the conversation was carried on in a subdued whisper; it was of Alec Scarsdale, Miss Esther, of hopes and fears. There was a set, strained look on Tom Jackson's honest face.

"We can do no more," said Crump gently, "than put our trust in the All-merciful!"

There was a considerable pause.

"But if it is so," whispered Tom Jackson fiercely, the first to break the silence, "we shall want payment in full for his life—for Miss Esther's broken heart!"

"We shall indeed, Tom!"

And Crump's face assumed an expression that was seldom seen upon it. There was another silence.

"But, my dear lads, we must not stand still. God helps those who help themselves, and I say it with all reverence. Fred, it is in consequence of your letter that I am here. An old colleague of mine, who does private work now—but, of course, you remember Grogan—has promised to look after Faversham in my absence. I regret to say that my efforts in that quarter have up to the present resulted in nothing. I had hoped—but no matter. Your letter, Fred, told me that you are going to have a quiet supper with my old friend, Tomlinson. Now for some time past I have been desirous of gaining access to the Firs. Hitherto the presence of Mr. Revelle and Faversham, also Tomlinson, have been obstacles in my way. But I fancy that a favourable opportunity presents itself to-night. I am afraid my entry, according to the letter of the law, would be accounted felonious, or, at least, unlawful, but I'm prepared to take my chance. I want, while you are supping with Tomlinson, to have a thorough look round the premises."

And at that moment, the little man moving in his chair, a faint rattle came from his pocket that to Fred's excited mind suggested skeleton keys.

"But, look here, uncle!" gasped Fred. "You don't mean to say——"

"But I do, my dear lad. I have quite made up my mind!"

There was a knock on the door, and Mrs. Cobb entered with the tea. And it was indeed a tea good to behold. Others had lodged at Woodbine Cottage; but never such a tea had been set before them; but then there had never been such a lodger as Mr. Penworthy. Crump inspired the men and women whom he came in contact with to do their best for him, whether they were landladies or young constables.

The little man sat himself down at the head of the table, and proceeded to pour out tea. Fred winked at Tom. The wink was returned. But they were sad winks, for a gloom was over all.

"And I hope," said Mrs. Cobb, "that you'll find everything to your liking, Mr. Penworthy!"

"Mrs. Cobb," answered the little man, "you have set before us a regal feast. And I wouldn't mind wagering that that delicious-looking jam is of your own preserving!"

"What I like about Mr. Penworthy," said Mrs. Cobb to herself, after she had left the room, "is that he's never too busy to be pleasant. And he does notice little things so."

"Tom, do you take sugar? Fred, I know you do! I understand, Fred, that with the exception of Tomlinson, and the old lady who comes in to clean up the place and cook for Tomlinson, the other servants have been given a holiday. In your letter you stated that nine o'clock was the time fixed for supper. Tomlinson is one of those machine-like, well-oiled men who are punctual to the minute. Those parts of the Firs that neither you nor Tom have had access to—I have contrived to obtain a very fair idea of from Mrs. Cobb. She is on intimate terms with one of the maid-servants. At about a quarter past nine I shall endeavour to effect my entry, probably by the back door. I don't suppose that it will be locked until after you have left the premises; but should it be, then I shall find another mode of ingress. I shall effect my entry while you are at supper. There is a very excellent billiard-table at the Firs. After supper, Fred, I want you to challenge Tomlinson to play you 'a hundred up!' Have a couple of sovereigns on the game. It will increase Tomlinson's interest. You will lose, Fred; but play him a second game for the same stake."

The little man drew out a five-pound note, and handed it to his nephew.

"Don't be afraid to flash that about rather ostentatiously. It will impress Tomlinson. Should he remark upon it, hint rather mysteriously that a policeman, if he knows his way about, has other sources of income besides his pay. Don't be afraid to give him the idea that you are an unscrupulous young man. Knowing something of Tomlinson, I take it for granted that you will have your supper in his master's dining-room. I shall want to know when you are passing to the billiard-room. You might either sneeze loudly, or whistle some tune—shall we say the 'Honeysuckle and the Bee'? And that Fred, I think, is all. Let me give you some more tea. Tom, pass your cup!"

The two young men interchanged glances of admiration. The little man, having poured out tea, affixed something into his button-hole, and the next moment a beam of electric light flashed from his chest. He gave a little chuckle.

"It is superior to a lantern," he explained, "and I obtained the idea from one of those men who suddenly spring on to 'buses and demand to see the ticket that one has invariably mislaid or lost. They carry such a lamp at night time. It is a compact and ingenious little affair!"

He switched off the light, and passed the jam to Tom. Then he produced a bunch of skeleton keys from a pocket.

"These 'twirls'—to give them their professional name—were once the property of Cully Scott, alias the Smasher, who is now leading an honourable, manly life, and whom I am proud to count one of my best friends. Better twirls than these he has assured me, could not be obtained for love or money. Fred, would you please cut me another piece of bread. Thank you! This bread is home-made. There is always such a charm to me about home-made things. I shall have to be very careful to-night, my dear lads; a mistake might render me liable to five years' penal servitude. But"—the little man's eyes twinkled—"if I should bungle, and Tomlinson's suspicions be aroused, I trust, Fred, that your zeal may be misdirected, and that you will look for me in the wrong place. Tomlinson is an arrant coward. If it were a question of looking for a supposed burglar, he would let you lead the way, and you would lead the wrong way!"

When, some time after, Fred and Tom had taken their departure, the little man lighted his pipe, and sat in sad meditation. His kindly heart ached for Esther. The morrow, perhaps, might bring news of Scarsdale. He felt that he would welcome even the news of his re-capture. Then he drew his pencilled map from a pocket, and studied it for some time. He shook his head.

"Rightly or wrongly," he muttered, "I am convinced in my own mind now; but, though the circumstantial evidence is growing stronger, there's not nearly enough to go before a jury at present—at present! To prove that poor young fellow's innocence is my first object; but I don't despair of bringing home this other foul crime to you, Mr. Seaton Revelle.

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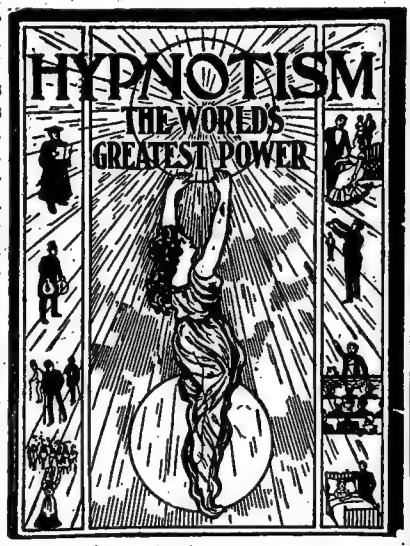

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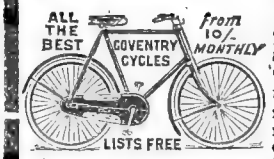

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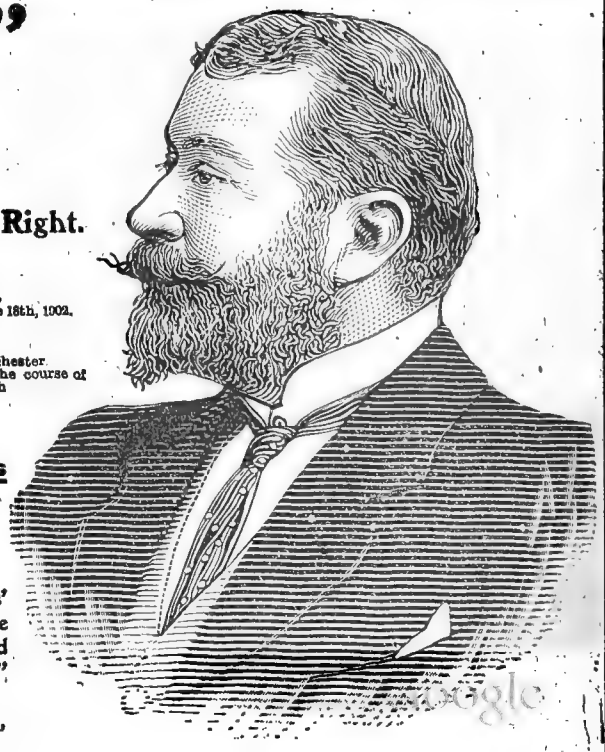

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The fouler crime, but poor Vance is out of her misery, has found, I dare to believe, the rest that she craved for; but Esther Mansfield's misery continues, grows more acute. You cowardly dog, you! You foul fellow, you!"

When Mrs. Cobb entered, Mr. Penworthy announced his intention of going out for a stroll. Mrs. Cobb—nine o'clock was her average bed time—would not wait up for him. He carried his key.

Warham Church clock was striking nine when Crump left Woodbine Cottage. There was nothing about his bearing to suggest the daring venture upon which he was bent. It was only when the Firs was in sight that he knocked the ashes out of his pipe. Then, sitting on a stile, he drew off his boots, and drew on an extra pair of stout woollen socks. He concealed his boots in a ditch. The quiet road was deserted.

In his days of active service, Crump had been noted for his unconventionality of method. He was certainly living up to his old reputation now.

He passed into the grounds. Lights were shining from the windows of the room that he knew to be the dining-room. He chuckled softly.

"I thought so," he said to himself, "in the absence of his master my old friend Tomlinson is doing himself in style!"

He crept up to one of the windows, and peered through a chink in the shutters. He chuckled again. His sense of humour was tickled. A most *récherché* supper was spread upon the snowy cloth. Wine sparkled in decanters. Cut glass glittered. Tomlinson sat at the head of the table, in his master's accustomed place, and Fred was apparently doing full justice to the delicacies set before him.

"I take wine with you, Wilton!" said Railton, otherwise Tomlinson, raising his glass politely. Fred bowed, and also raised his glass. "I trust the wine is to your liking!"

"Quite a little comedy!" said Crump to himself, and then made his way round to the back entrance. The door, as he had anticipated, was not locked. He quietly admitted himself. There was not the slightest sign of strain or flurry on the homely face; its expression was rather one of mild amusement. Lights were burning.

"Mr. Revelle's rooms first, I think!" he said to himself.

He had never set foot inside the place before; but the description furnished him by Mrs. Cobb amply sufficed for his purpose. He made his way up the back stairs to Revelle's bedroom, a dressing-room adjoining. Here there was no light. He closed the door. A beam of light flashed from his buttonhole; then seeing a gas-jet, he drew the thick curtains over the window and lighted the gas. Had it been his own house, he could not have seemed more thoroughly at home.

Locks yielded magically under his skilful manipulation of the twirls, once the property of Cully Scott, alias the Smasher. Swiftly he searched through cupboards, wardrobes, chests of drawers, replacing the articles in such a careful way that there were practically no signs that they had been disturbed.

But, as yet, nothing of importance had been unearthed.

The whistled tune of "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" just reached him. He smiled faintly. Fred and Tomlinson were passing into the billiard-room.

"Good lad!" he muttered under his breath. "So far I've drawn a blank. Let us now try the dressing-room!"

In the dressing-room there was more skilful manipulation of the skeleton keys, more careful searchings and replacings.

"Hullo! This looks more promising. There's a false bottom to this trunk!"

The little man's eyes brightened. He withdrew his hand from the trunk in which he had been rummaging, and started to empty out the contents.

(Another splendid instalment next Tuesday.)

OUR NEW SERIAL.

In the course of a few weeks a powerful new serial story will start in *Short Stories*. It is the work of a favourite author, who has given many months of careful work to the story. The date of the number in which it starts will be announced shortly.

A WOULD-BE funny man writes us a joke about the weather, and spells it wethur. We don't like to criticise a good attempt, but this seems like the worst spell of weather we ever experienced.

LIPSLEY: "You know those cigars Miss Beacon sent me for Christmas?" Lapsley: "Yes." Lipsley: "Well, I gave a lot to my friends, and now I haven't any left." Lapsley: "What, cigars?" Lipsley: "No, friends."

A VERY small boy was trying to lead a big St. Bernard up the road. "What are you going to do with that dog?" asked a kindly gentleman. "I can't make up my mind," was the answer; "not till I find out what the dog thinks o' doin' with me!"

LITTLE BOY: "I want you to write me an excuse for being late at school yesterday." Jeweller: "Eh? You are not my son." Little Boy: "N—o, but mamma says I had plenty of time to get to school, so I suppose the clock you sold her doesn't go right."

FIRST YOUNG MAN (last summer): "I have met a good many amateur photographers, but I never saw one quite so devoted to the fad as you are." Second Young Man: "I never take photographs." First Young Man: "Eh? Then why do you carry that detective camera about with you all day, week in and week out?" Second Young Man: "Because when the girls see me coming all the ugly ones run away and all the pretty ones stay."

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By Madge Morris.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

The Advanced Flirt.

"A young lady to whom I was recently engaged has thrown me over," writes "Georgie." "She has been in the habit of leading fellows on to propose to her, and then refusing them. She has had twenty proposals of marriage, and will do all she can to attract anyone who looks at her a second time. Do you call her a flirt?"

* * * *

Yes, "Georgie," I do. If you had asked me to give my definition of a flirt, I could not improve on your own description of the girl. Further, she is a flirt of the most malignant type; one who appears to have no serious regard for the affections of anyone. Such girls, as we all know, usually end their lives old maids, or social outcasts, as, after a certain age, when their surface attraction has passed away, retribution always follows in their train, and sourness and disappointment soon do their work.

❦❦❦

Is She a Flirt?

"Herbert" has been hearing things to the detriment of his sweetheart. People have told him that she is only trifling with him, and give him instances of her flirtations with others. He has not seen her for some weeks, and has not heard much from her. How ought he to act to find out whether the stories are really true?

* * * *

It would be very much better for "Herbert" to tell her straight out what he has heard, and make her give either a denial or confirmation of the story. Too many love troubles are the result of this miserable mischief-making, and too many lovers allow themselves to be swayed by the off-hand opinions of others, when they have access to first-hand information which might easily dispel them.

❦❦❦

A Case for Withdrawal.

Is a man compelled to declare anything to a girl? "T. G." has been seeing a great deal of a certain damsel lately, and knows that she is steeped in admiration for him. He, on the other hand, is not particularly fond of her, though he does not know whether in time he may not grow to be. Meanwhile should he reveal his feelings to her at all, in response to her overtures?

* * * *

"T. G." is very foolish to be so attentive to a girl if he has no particular liking for her. Surely it is not necessary for him to be constantly with her? As he is, she has very good ground for suspecting that her own liking is returned. "T. G." had better draw off while there is yet time.

❦❦❦

Lover or Friend?

Is it a sign of love when a man makes a confidant of a girl, and tells her of his own private affairs, his past attachments, and other things of a confidential nature? "Lucy" is constantly made the confidant of men in these matters, but one man in particular is always seeking out her company, and when with her, constantly talks of himself in the most confidential strain. Does this suggest that he is in any way in love with "Lucy"? He has not as yet made any professions.

I should think the sign is rather that he looks upon "Lucy" as a friend. Some people, as you know, have the curious faculty of drawing other people's confidences from them. It is rather a trait of a person with great qualities of friendship than one to invite the overtures of love. "Lucy" had better not think too much of this man's confidences in her. Wait till he says something definite about his feelings towards you. When he does, be pretty sure he will be in earnest, as he evidently values you too much as a friend to make overtures in anything but sincerity. I have rather an admiration for friendships of this kind. They often have more likelihood of ripening into love than a good many of the idle vapourings of boys and girls.

❦❦❦

A Faint-hearted Swain.

"Bandy" has, he tells me, fallen in love with a certain girl, but does not want to say anything about it to her. How can he find out in return whether she loves him?

* * * *

Oh, faint heart, do you suppose these tactics will ever win you fair lady? There is no hard and fast rule on which to proceed in love-making. If in the course of your conversation you do not find some method of gaining her confidence, and talking intimately, evidently she is not in sympathy with you to a very great extent. Before you speculate as to whether she loves you, make sure if she likes you. That settled, the other may follow with time. These emotions are not made in a moment, and often take months to mature. Pursue your friendship with her as far as you can, and leave it to time to decide whether it is to ripen into love.

❦❦❦

Unrequited Affection.

Six years ago "Hetty" was seventeen and met the man who has attracted her more than anyone else in life. She has never seen another to equal him in her estimation. But since that time she has never set eyes on him until the other day. On meeting him again, he did not seem to show any particular pleasure at their renewed meeting, but "Hetty" felt more infatuated than ever. Should she give him any hint as to her feelings, or keep them absolutely to herself?

* * * *

"Hetty" had far better forget all about him now before the infatuation grows on her. Probably the man has other attachments. His coolness to her may have been the result of a desire not to arouse in her the old feelings, as he knew he could not reciprocate them. Let "Hetty" blot out his image from her mind—at any rate, if he shows no signs of reciprocating her attachment—and it will be an easier matter than allowing the infatuation to spread, and cause certain disappointment.

❦❦❦

A Question of Priority.

"Lottie" has two gentlemen friends who often visit her. One of them invited her to go to the theatre one night. After accepting she had a misunderstanding with him, and he left the house without visiting her for some time. Thinking the engagement was cancelled she accepted another invitation from the other friend for the same night. But after accepting the latter engagement, the first man called and claimed the appointment. She would rather have kept the second one than the first. Which ought she really to have kept?

* * * *

As "Lottie" had accepted the first engagement, she had no right to cancel it without letting him know. It would have been quite easy to drop him a line to say that she "regretted being unable to keep it." As it happened, the first man was entitled to claim his engagement, and "Lottie" should refuse the second. At heart the second man would have thought none the less of "Lottie" for being constant to her engagements.

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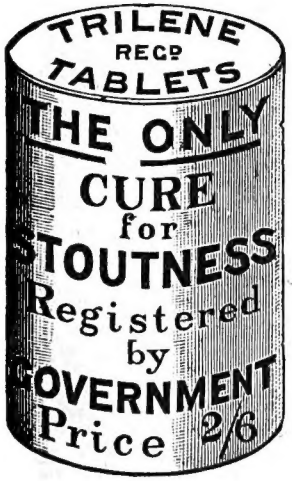

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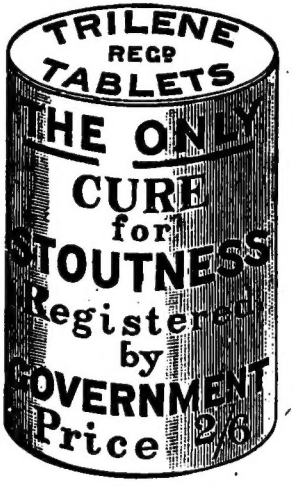

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COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

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COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Liatorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes, Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

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Mrs. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

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Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

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